



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**NORTH KOREA'S CHOICE OF THE TYPES OF  
PROVOCATION AGAINST SOUTH KOREA**

by

Hyun Haeng Lee

December 2013

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Wade L. Huntley  
Daniel Moran

**Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited**

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> December 2013	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> NORTH KOREA'S CHOICE OF THE TYPES OF PROVOCATION AGAINST SOUTH KOREA			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Hyun Haeng Lee				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b> A	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b>  <p>This research starts from the question of how North Korea decides upon the types of its provocations against the South. To find the answer, the author divides the major provocations into three periods, according to their characteristics, and examines how the major decisive factors of the North's crisis policy making, such as military strength, relations with China and the Soviet Union (Russia), regime stability, and economic power, affected its choice of provocation types. The results of the analysis suggest that Pyongyang has chosen the targets, scale, and methods of provocation by thoroughly evaluating its current military, diplomatic, political, and economic conditions.</p> <p>Therefore, what types of provocations will be initiated by North Korea in the future? One of the obvious points is that Pyongyang's confidence to defeat Seoul will not be restored soon, and the unexpected strong response of the United States and South Korea will confuse the North's strategic decision making. For that reason, the most effective way for South Korea to deter any possible provocations by the North is to put more pressure on the Kim regime by using its overwhelming national power and conveying its strong intention to retaliate against the North's threats on the basis of the firm ROK-U.S. military alliance.</p>				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Provocation, Crisis Management Strategy, Fait Accompli, Attrition, Controlled Pressure, Regime Stability, Terror, Maritime Conflict			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 93	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU	

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)  
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

**Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited**

**NORTH KOREA'S CHOICE OF THE TYPES OF PROVOCATION AGAINST  
SOUTH KOREA**

Hyun Haeng Lee  
Captain, Republic of Korea Army  
B.A., Korea Military Academy, 2005

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(FAR EAST, SOUTHEAST ASIA, THE PACIFIC)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
December 2013**

Author: Hyun Haeng Lee

Approved by: Wade L. Huntley  
Thesis Advisor

Daniel Moran  
Second Reader

Mohammed M. Hafez  
Chair, Department of National Security Affairs

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## **ABSTRACT**

This research starts from the question of how North Korea decides upon the types of its provocations against the South. To find the answer, the author divides the major provocations into three periods, according to their characteristics, and examines how the major decisive factors of the North's crisis policy making, such as military strength, relations with China and the Soviet Union (Russia), regime stability, and economic power, affected its choice of provocation types. The results of the analysis suggest that Pyongyang has chosen the targets, scale, and methods of provocation by thoroughly evaluating its current military, diplomatic, political, and economic conditions.

Therefore, what types of provocations will be initiated by North Korea in the future? One of the obvious points is that Pyongyang's confidence to defeat Seoul will not be restored soon, and the unexpected strong response of the United States and South Korea will confuse the North's strategic decision making. For that reason, the most effective way for South Korea to deter any possible provocations by the North is to put more pressure on the Kim regime by using its overwhelming national power and conveying its strong intention to retaliate against the North's threats on the basis of the firm ROK-U.S. military alliance.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>IMPORTANCE.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.	Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang's Study on North Korea's Nuclear Issue .....	3
2.	Young Whan Kihl's Study on North Korea's Survival Strategy ....	4
3.	Yong-pil Lee's Study on the Decisive Factors of Policy Making in a Crisis .....	5
4.	Alexander L. George's Study on the Types of Crisis Management Strategy.....	6
<b>E.</b>	<b>METHODS AND SOURCES.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>F.</b>	<b>THESIS OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>CLASSIFICATION OF THE TYPES OF PROVOCATIONS.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>PERIOD OF TRIGGERING WAR: AFTER WAR TO 1960S.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>MILITARY STRENGTH .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND THE SOVIET UNION.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>REGIME STABILITY .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>ECONOMIC POWER.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>CORRELATION WITH THE TYPE OF PROVOCATION.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>PERIOD OF COMMITTING TERROR: 1970S TO MID-1990S .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>MILITARY STRENGTH .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND THE SOVIET UNION.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>REGIME STABILITY .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>ECONOMIC POWER.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>CORRELATION WITH THE TYPE OF PROVOCATION.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>PERIOD OF PROVOKING MARITIME CONFLICT: MID-1990S TO PRESENT .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>MILITARY STRENGTH .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND RUSSIA .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>REGIME STABILITY .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>ECONOMIC POWER.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>CORRELATION WITH THE TYPE OF PROVOCATION.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>67</b>
	<b>LIST OF REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>71</b>
	<b>INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....</b>	<b>75</b>

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Correlation between Decisive Factors and Provocation Type (after War to 1960s).....	33
Figure 2.	Correlation between Decisive Factors and Provocation Type (1970s to Mid-1990s).....	50
Figure 3.	Correlation between Decisive Factors and Provocation Type (Mid-1990s to Present) .....	65
Figure 4.	Changing Trend of Decisive Factors and Provocation Types .....	68

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Offensive and Defensive Crisis Management Strategies.....	8
Table 2.	General Status of Provocations (1954-November 2010).....	13
Table 3.	Major Provocations Against South Korea .....	16
Table 4.	Periodic Division of Provocations .....	18
Table 5.	Comparison of the Military Strength of the Two Koreas (1953–1969).....	21
Table 6.	Comparison of GNP Per Capita of the Two Koreas (1953–1964) .....	30
Table 7.	Comparison of Military Strength of the Two Koreas (1970–1992) .....	37
Table 8.	Changing Trend of North Korean Major Troops (1976–1993) .....	39
Table 9.	Changing Trend of North Korea’s Trade Volume (1980–1986) .....	47
Table 10.	North Korea’s Missile Development Process .....	53
Table 11.	North Korea’s Long-Range Missile Stockpiles .....	54
Table 12.	Quantitative Changes of North Korean Conventional Forces .....	55
Table 13.	North Korean Defectors (1998–2011) .....	59
Table 14.	Comparison of GNI of the Two Koreas (1996–2010) .....	61
Table 15.	North Korea’s Economic Growth Rate (1996–2010) .....	61

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CC	Central Committee
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CMC	Central Military Commission
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
GNI	Gross National Income
KPA	Korean People's Army
KWP	Korean Workers' Party
NDC	National Defense Commission
PKO	Peace-Keeping Operations
ROK	Republic of Korea
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Indeed, many things happened in my life for the last two years. When I first studied military strategy at Korea National Defense University, I was painfully aware of my own ignorance and the infiniteness of learning. While I prepared to come to Naval Postgraduate School, I faced various procedural problems and suffered from the lack of time and information. After that, life in America was also a continuation of challenges and hardships. I had to adapt quickly to an unfamiliar language, culture, and people and accomplish a high level of academic goals, including writing a thesis, within one year. Thus, thinking back on it now, it was a near miracle that I overcame all of these difficulties.

Of course, I could never make this miracle by myself. First of all, I appreciate the Korean Ministry of National Defense and KNDU for giving me a chance to study at NPS. It was a great opportunity for me to gain invaluable experience not only for my military career but also for my life. Especially, I would like to express my special thanks to Professor Wade L. Huntley and Professor Daniel Moran for their insightful advice and guidance from start to finish of my thesis. Without their help, my research project would never have been completed on time. Surely, it was KNDU where I could develop my potential to successfully study national security at NPS. I believe that the lessons I learned from the ten professors, including Professor Choi, Jong-chul, of the Department of Military Strategy in KNDU formed a strong foundation for my thesis.

I also want to remember my friends who gave me sincere mental and emotional support for two years. The nine schoolmates, including Major Lee, Chun-hak, in KNDU always encouraged me in my lonely preparation for studying abroad. Plus, my best American friends, Donald, Michael, and Leo, who have had wonderful times with me by studying and exercising together, will remain forever in my memory. Above all, the most helpful supporter was my wife, Kim, Minjeong. Thanks to her dedicated effort and sacrifice for my study, we have been able to enjoy the happy and meaningful life in Monterey. Lastly, I want to give thanks to my God for his blessings.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

The greatest threat to South Korea is North Korea. Due to the North's constant provocations over the 60 years since the Korean War, South Korea has suffered enormous damage and made great sacrifices to establish stability on the Korean Peninsula. Though leaders from both countries have sometimes met and agreed on the need for a new era of peace, provocations have continued without intermission. Pyongyang has continued its unreliable behavior, even during the ten years when South Korea undertook practical changes for peace under the Sunshine Policy of the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations. Most recently, the North's deliberate provocations (such as the sinking of the South Korean corvette *Cheonan* and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in 2010) significantly aggravated the security environment of the peninsula.

These provocations have not always taken the same form. The military and nonmilitary threats over half a century have differed widely in their targets, scale, and methods. For example, it is hard to categorize the raid on the Blue House in 1968, the bombing of a Korean Air flight in 1987, and several skirmishes in the West Sea in the 1990s and the 2000s as a single type of aggression. North Korea has diversified the types of provocation according to specific situations and conditions, and this political technique has hindered the South's ability to respond successfully. The important point is that it is hard to figure out why North Korea chooses a particular type of provocation in a certain circumstance. Given the possibility of South Korea's strong response, and the risk of such a backlash being more than the North Korean regime can handle, it can be inferred that the types of provocation North Korea is willing to undertake might not be decided accidentally. This research, therefore, tries to find the practical answer about how North Korea decides upon the types of provocation it makes.

## **B. IMPORTANCE**

The outcome of this research on how the types of the North's provocation are chosen can be a useful foundation to predict the forms of upcoming threats and prepare suitable strategies and responses. Furthermore, it can ultimately promote South Korea's effective deterrence against the North's continuing provocations. In the current tense situation, where North and South face each other across the Military Demarcation Line, repeated provocations are the most efficient diplomatic measures of the Kim regime to overcome domestic instability, economic plight, and international isolation without plunging into an unwanted war. Seoul, therefore, should recognize that Pyongyang will consistently try to take advantage of these provocations, and has to focus its energy upon ending the North's threat. Taken together, understanding how North Korea selects its antagonism is a valuable first step to establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula.

## **C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES**

The security situation of the two countries since the war has been one long sequence of crises. The North and the South have developed and maintained operational plans that regard each other as an enemy; as a result, each continually increases its military strength in order to defeat the other. Moreover, not only the two Koreas but also several great powers like the United States, China, Japan, and Russia have had repeated fierce power contests and diplomatic competitions in this small territory. Collectively, these nations maintain more than 6,850,000 troops by means of \$889 billion in defense spending, which makes up most of the world's total.<sup>1</sup> Of course, Pyongyang sometimes reduces the number and intensity of its provocations and actively participates in talks with the international community, in a mood of reconciliation. Even at these times, however, the major operative premise is that the security environment of the peninsula is basically a crisis.

Therefore, this research, on the basis of the hypothesis that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has perceived its security environment as a

---

<sup>1</sup> Kang-nyung Kim, "Change of the Northeast Asia's Security Environment and Korea's Defense Policy Issues," *Northeast Asia Studies* 26, no. 1 (2011): 56.

perpetual crisis since the end of the Korean War, will seek to determine the patterns by which the North chooses provocation types, by applying existing models of crisis policy making. The basis for this approach is that, as mentioned above, the tense situation of the two Koreas arrayed against each other has been treated as an endless crisis by North Korea. Furthermore, the North's endemic problems (such as distrust toward the regime, widespread starvation, and condemnation from the international community), which have continued since the establishment of the socialist rule, have continuously aggravated the regime's mindset of perpetual crisis. In conclusion, with the hypothesis that Pyongyang's situational awareness of constant crisis has affected its choice of the types of provocations it would undertake against Seoul, this thesis will generate new insights into North Korean behavior by applying models of crisis policy making to better understand the North's decision making in continually undertaking provocations against South Korea.

#### **D. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review will form the theoretical framework that can be applied to this paper, by looking into several previous lines of research. To accomplish this purpose, at first, it reviews two existing studies on North Korea's threat and survival and identifies their limitations. After that, it analyzes two lines of research about the model of crisis policy making and describes the two major considerations of policy making: decisive factors (independent variable) and types of policies (dependent variable).

##### **1. Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang's Study on North Korea's Nuclear Issue**

Cha and Kang, by exchanging contrasting views on the North Korean nuclear issue, try to reach a concerted conclusion about how the United States should deal with the crisis wisely. Especially in the first chapter, Cha borrows the logic of preemptive and preventive action from international relations theory in order to answer the question of why Pyongyang has been continuing its suicidal attacks without judging the consequences rationally. He argues that the North's dangerous behavior is based on its rational calculation that committing a provocation will be cheaper than achieving peace. Therefore, he adds that Pyongyang can rationally decide to cause a conflict even when

there is no chance of winning. By using this analysis, he concludes that Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul have to take an engagement policy instead of an isolation strategy.<sup>2</sup>

Cha and Kang's work suggests the practical foreign policy toward North Korea that the United States should adopt to resolve, not only the nuclear crisis, but also the overall North Korean questions. Furthermore, their opposing analyses and refutations of each other's views provide diverse perspectives on understanding the issues plaguing the Korean Peninsula. Although their collaboration offers the rational logic that has made Pyongyang keep threatening Seoul despite the expected risk, it cannot properly explain the relations between the logic and the types of threats. In other words, their idea needs to be developed further to let people understand why North Korea committed certain types of threatening behaviors in certain situations.

## **2. Young Whan Kihl's Study on North Korea's Survival Strategy**

Kihl's research aims to discover how North Korea could survive without collapsing or changing like other socialist states. First, in respect to the economy, Pyongyang, which had faced dire economic circumstances and chronic food shortage after Kim Il-sung's death, attempted to conduct a limited economic reform and modernization movement, "Building *Kangsong Taeguk*," modeled on China's reform and opening up. Second, politically, Kim Jong-il could sustain the regime's stability by smoothing the hereditary succession and tightening his grip on party and military. Third, in diplomacy, Pyongyang tried to secure an equal footing with other powers at the negotiating table by using nuclear brinkmanship and other provocations. Lastly, in the mental aspect, the North's deep-rooted philosophy of *Juche*, traditional isolationism, and self-righteous tendency made it easy to control the people's thinking compulsorily.<sup>3</sup> In sum, the author concludes that North Korea's innovative change or abject collapse would be far into the future because of these self-help efforts and national characteristics.

---

<sup>2</sup> Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 18–20.

<sup>3</sup> Young Whan Kihl and Hong Nack Kim, *North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 3–20.

Kihl provides useful background knowledge for understanding the diverse causes of the Kim regime's survival. He tries to find the North's unique strategy for maintaining its regime by comparing it with other socialist-bloc countries that have either collapsed or changed their policies. Especially, by highlighting the North's attempts for limited changes and its unique mindset, which were neglected in the existing Korean studies, he can thoroughly explain the basis of the regime's continued existence. Nevertheless, his study leaves something to be desired. For instance, there is no definite explanation about the underlying motives of the North's policies for its survival. Plus, he does not deal in depth with whether the North's persistent provocations have contributed to its survival; nor does he discuss what mechanism Pyongyang uses to decide upon its methods of intimidation.

### **3. Yong-pil Lee's Study on the Decisive Factors of Policy Making in a Crisis**

By presenting a general model of crisis policy making, the author insists that the three decisive factors (crisis event, international context, and domestic context) affect policy makers' choices in a crisis. First, a crisis event refers to the unexpected consequence of behaviors (one's own or those of one's opponent) that cause a crisis in a stable condition. This event threatens core values of organizations, limits reaction times, and makes it hard to predict the future. Second, an international context consists of the past, present, and future global environments, as well as relations with an opponent that influence the international awareness of crises. It involves international politics, opinions, dynamics, and geopolitical factors. Lastly, a domestic context is made up of national values, conditions, and trends affecting an interpretation of a crisis event, and involves domestic politics, military and economic conditions, ideology, and perceptions of national security.<sup>4</sup>

On the basis of his three independent variables, the decisive factors can be grouped into four main elements: regime stability, relations with China and the Soviet Union (Russia), military strength, and economic power. These elements drive regime

---

<sup>4</sup> Yong-pil Lee, *Crisis Management: Theories and Cases* (Seoul: Ingansarang, 1992), 186–198.

decision making. First, since regime stability is of the utmost importance to Pyongyang, all threats that cause political instability are regarded as crisis events. Thus, crises start from any event that threatens the survival of the regime, and the Northern response is based on perceptions of that event. Second, relations with China and the Soviet Union (Russia) work as decisive factors that form an international context. Though the North's public relations with these countries have been diminished as consequences of China's reform and opening up and the Soviets' collapse, these two communist allies' roles have had dominant impacts on the North's international context since its foundation. Lastly, in terms of a domestic context, military strength and economic power are the essential factors that decide the diversity and intensity of crisis management policies and affect the overall level of awareness about a crisis through the comparison with South Korea. In conclusion, these four specified factors can be utilized in this research, which analyzes the North's reasons for provocation.

#### **4. Alexander L. George's Study on the Types of Crisis Management Strategy**

The author, through an analysis of historical cases and empirical studies, gives several concrete examples of crisis management strategy. Policy making in a crisis, unlike other peaceful times, causes extreme stress and pressure for political leaders by requiring them to expand their roles abruptly and react urgently. Therefore, to overcome the crisis effectively, policy makers should conceive and prepare many contingency strategies in advance, by considering all factors that influence the situation. To support this point, George examines the U.S. and Soviet strategies that were employed to avoid entering a war during a series of tense confrontations in the Cold War (in Berlin, Cuba, Asia, and the Middle East). By using this analysis, he categorizes the strategies into two major types: offensive strategies for changing a status quo and defensive strategies for blocking a change.<sup>5</sup>

Offensive crisis management strategies are established for the purpose of altering the current situation by threatening an adversary's interest. These strategies intend to

---

<sup>5</sup> Alexander L. George, *Avoiding War: Problems of Crisis Management* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 377–378.



compel obedience from an opponent and prevent the expansion of a crisis by presenting an aggressive act, so that one side can resolve a fundamental political dilemma by creating a favorable environment even when the opponent is holding a dominant position. However, if the challenger's blackmail, intimidation, and warning exceed the adversary's acceptance level of risk, those strategic activities can elevate the crisis. Moreover, since these strategies usually depend on a subjective evaluation of force differentials, an elaborate observation of the adversary and a sober assessment of the situation are essential. Offensive strategies include blackmail; a limited, reversible probe; controlled pressure; *fait accompli*; and attrition.<sup>6</sup>

Defensive crisis management strategies are planned to protect the actor's initial interest and deter an unwanted war when the response to impede the adversary's effort to change the situation is likely to heighten a crisis. These strategies start from the estimation that an excessive use of force and a hostile response to diffuse a crisis can exacerbate the problem, so it would be better to prevent the crisis from worsening by using some indirect methods such as diplomatic negotiation, limited response, expression of will, and test of capabilities. Overly defensive gestures excluding physical responses, however, can encourage the opponent's aggressive tendency and make the actor neglect the importance of military buildup to prepare for the worst. Defensive strategies include coercive diplomacy, limited escalation coupled with deterrence of counterescalation, tit-for-tat coupled with deterrence of escalation by the opponent, test of capabilities coupled with deterrence of escalation by the opponent, drawing a line, conveying commitment and resolve to avoid miscalculation by the adversary, and buying time to explore a negotiated settlement.<sup>7</sup> All offensive and defensive crisis management strategies are summarized in Table 1.

---

<sup>6</sup> George, *Avoiding War*, 379–383.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 383–393.

Classification		Characteristics
<b>Offensive Crisis Management Strategies</b>	<b>Blackmail</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Demand the adversary give up something on pain of suffering serious damage if it refuses</li> <li>· Try to achieve a gain without using force</li> </ul>
	<b>Limited Probe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Uncertain whether the adversary hopes to change the status quo</li> <li>· Initiate a probing action to detect the adversary's intention</li> </ul>
	<b>Controlled Pressure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Confident that the adversary wants to defend the status quo</li> <li>· Try to alter the status quo by employing low-level option, which is difficult for the adversary to counter</li> </ul>
	<b>Fait Accompli</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Confident that the adversary does not want to defend the position under dispute</li> <li>· Believe that the gains outweigh the losses</li> <li>· Take quick and decisive action to alter the status quo</li> </ul>
	<b>Attrition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Unfavorable conditions for using other offensive strategies</li> <li>· Adopt a guerrilla or terrorist form of attrition strategy to wear out a stronger but less-motivated adversary</li> </ul>
<b>Defensive Crisis Management Strategies</b>	<b>Coercive Diplomacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Employ threats of force or quite limited increments of force</li> <li>· Persuade the adversary to cease its provocative behavior</li> </ul>
	<b>Limited Escalation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Try to alter the ground rules to obtain more favorable terms for crisis bargaining</li> <li>· Engage in limited and selective escalation</li> </ul>
	<b>Tit-for-Tat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Carry out carefully measured tit-for-tat reprisals for the provocations of the adversary</li> <li>· Choose reprisals according to the severity of the provocations</li> </ul>
	<b>Test of Capabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Too risky and politically unacceptable to use the strategy of limited escalation to secure more favorable ground</li> <li>· Accept a test of capabilities within the framework of the disadvantageous ground rules and limitations</li> </ul>
	<b>Drawing a Line</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Define what action by the adversary would provoke a response</li> <li>· Act responsively to avoid an escalation of the crisis that neither side wants</li> </ul>
	<b>Conveying Commitment &amp; Resolve</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Confident that the adversary wants to alter the status quo</li> <li>· Convey commitment and resolution to oppose any forthcoming provocation and avoid a miscalculation by the adversary</li> </ul>
	<b>Buying Time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Confident that the adversary wants to alter the status quo</li> <li>· Try to buy time in order to explore the possibility of mutually acceptable negotiated settlement</li> </ul>

Table 1. Offensive and Defensive Crisis Management Strategies<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> George, *Avoiding War*, 379–392.

## **E. METHODS AND SOURCES**

The analytical framework of this thesis is composed of the logical processes to figure out the patterns of North Korea's choice of provocation forms and predict future threats by applying existing models of crisis policy making. To support this, the probable structure of the North's policy making is inferred through the literature review in Section D of this chapter. The decisive factors are military strength, relations with China and the Soviet Union (Russia), regime stability, and economic power; and the examples suggested by George can be adopted to analyze the North's previous provocative acts. The second stage analyzes the North's significant provocations after the war and divides them into three periods according to their shapes and characteristics. The third stage evaluates Pyongyang's domestic and foreign situation during each period, by using the four decisive factors specified above, and then tries to find a correlation with the North's actual policies in selecting its provocations. The last stage confirms whether there are noteworthy patterns in this correlation, and draws the inferences that are useful to predict the future provocation types of North Korea.

This research utilizes diverse primary and secondary sources, according to the stage in question. The first stage used the sources discussed in the literature review in Section D, and the second stage uses South Korea's latest *Defense White Paper* and the U.S. Congressional Research Service reports to seek the records of the North's provocations. The third and fourth stages deal with the government documents, academic books, and scholarly journals that assess the domestic and overseas circumstances of Pyongyang.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW**

This thesis contains six chapters. This first chapter introduces the study's research question, importance, hypothesis, literature review, and methods to suggest the purpose and structure of the thesis. Chapter II verifies that there have been obvious differences in the targets, scale, and methods of the North's provocations, and classifies their types by time period. On the basis of this division, Chapters III-V analyze each period's decisive factors that affected North Korea's policy making in a crisis by focusing on finding the

correlation with the North's real provocations. These chapters, especially, utilize the basic structure of crisis policy making derived from the literature review, with the hypothesis that the Kim regime has perceived its security environment as a crisis. Lastly, Chapter VI, by summing up the results of the study and figuring out the existence of useful patterns, suggests the policy implications for the U.S. and South Korean governments.

## II. CLASSIFICATION OF THE TYPES OF PROVOCATIONS

This chapter clarifies which threatening actions of North Korea are provocations against the Republic of Korea (ROK), and classifies the types of provocations by time period and according to the similarities of major cases after the Korean War. Analyzing successfully the patterns of the North's choice of provocation forms, which is the ultimate objective of this thesis, requires investigation of how the political, economic, and diplomatic circumstances that Pyongyang faced in each period influenced its crisis policy making, and how those influences drew particular types of provocations. Therefore, the core process required prior to all of these studies is to verify whether there have been noteworthy similarities in the provocations within specific spans of time, and to divide the periods if the similarities are traceable. Through this process, studying the common characteristics of provocations in each period helps to form the basic framework to research the patterns of the North's decisions on the types of its provocations.

The division of Korea for half a century, which has no parallel in the world, has itself the huge possibility of causing endless conflicts between the North and the South. Though full-scale war or military conquest have become far less likely, the number and intensity of limited conflicts have not diminished. Moreover, Pyongyang continues to carry out adventurous military actions, against all common sense and despite its considerable disadvantages (e.g., severe resource shortfalls, oppressive international sanctions, and the strong Korea-U.S. alliance).<sup>9</sup> For example, "from 1954 to 1992, North Korea is reported to have infiltrated a total of 3,693 armed agents into South Korea," and "it has planned and attempted to assassinate the ROK president in 1968, 1970, 1974, 1981, and 1983."<sup>10</sup> These continuous, unpredictable threats have created successive crises and an unstable security environment in the South, while the North has been able to achieve its intended goals and interests by committing these constant provocations.

---

<sup>9</sup> Ha-yoon Seong, "Study on the Cause of North Korean Military Provocations: Focusing on the Bombardment to Yeonpyeong Island" (Master's thesis, Korea University, 2012), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Fischer, Hannah, *North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950–2007*, CRS Report RL30004 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2007), 1; Robert M. Collins, "North Korea's Strategy of Compellence, Provocations, and the Northern Limit Line," in *Confronting Security Challenges on the Korean Peninsula*, ed. Bruce E. Bechtol (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2011), 16.

All the conflicts caused by inter-Korean confrontation, however, cannot be defined as provocations. For example, the minor violations of the Armistice Agreement, nonstrategic military maneuvers, or ordinary propaganda are the kinds of things that escalate tension on the peninsula, but which are not regarded as actions that severely threaten the South's security. Thus, it is required to define the North's provocations clearly to sort out the cases of threatening actions appropriate to this thesis. In this context, Robert M. Collins insists that Pyongyang has employed diverse provocations, which involved limited and selective use of force, to achieve its political/military objectives by countering the superior diplomatic-economic advances of Seoul.<sup>11</sup> In addition to this, Congressional Research Service, in its report in 2007, lists the cases of North Korean provocative actions as follows:

armed invasion; border violations; infiltration of armed saboteurs and spies; hijacking; kidnapping; terrorism including assassination and bombing; threats/intimidation against political leaders, media personnel, and institutions; incitement aimed at the overthrow of the South Korean government; actions undertaken to impede progress in major negotiations; and tests of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons.<sup>12</sup>

Taken together, the North's provocations can be defined as all the military and nonmilitary actions, other than war, that threaten the South's security by raising tension in the region and inducing fear of war. The general status of provocations from 1954 to 2010, sorted by applying the definition, is summed up in Table 2.

---

<sup>11</sup> Collins, "North Korea's Strategy," 14–15.

<sup>12</sup> Fischer, Hannah, *North Korean Provocative Actions*, 1.

Classification	Number of Cases	Description
Infiltrations	Approx. 1,640	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 720 cases by land</li> <li>· 920 cases by sea</li> </ul>
Local provocations	Over 1,020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 470 cases by land (90 cases of shooting and artillery fire, 70 cases of raids and abductions, etc.)</li> <li>· 510 cases by sea (490 cases of naval ship/fishing boats crossing the border, 20 naval engagements)</li> <li>· 40 cases by air (20 cases of infiltrations into South Korean airspace, 10 cases of missile launches, etc.)</li> </ul>

Table 2. General Status of Provocations (1954-November 2010)<sup>13</sup>

To proceed efficiently, this thesis focuses only on the major cases listed above, those which caused serious damage to the South and involved prominent characteristics. They are arranged chronologically in Table 3. As shown in the table, North Korea has conducted a diverse range of provocations, from shootings by individuals to premeditated assassination attempts on presidents, terrorist attacks with veiled attackers, clandestine military raids, and illegal infiltrations into inland areas. These provocations, in other words, have never shared one characteristic in common, but varied in their targets, scale, and methods. Moreover, these different characteristics have shown noticeable similarities within specific spans of time, and those patterns have also changed with the periods.

Table 3 groups these different characteristics of the major cases into three categories. The first category, “War-risk,” is defined as the boldness and aggressiveness to accept the risk of war. The second category, “Terror,” is defined as the intention to give a significant shock to the enemy through a terrorist attack. The third category, “Maritime,” is defined as the tendency to provoke a calculated military conflict at sea.

---

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, *2010 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, 2011), 314.

Classification	Description	Category		
		War-Risk	Terror	Maritime
<b>February 16, 1958</b>	<b>South's commercial airliner on domestic flight from Busan to Seoul with 34 passengers aboard hijacked by North Korean agent</b> (only 26 sent back to South on March 6, 1958)		○	
<b>January 14, 1964</b>	<b>ROK F-86D fighter on training mission crossed into North's airspace due to radio malfunction and was shot down</b> (North returned pilot's body on January 17, 1964)	○		
<b>January 19, 1967</b>	<b>North's coastal artillery deployed along East Coast fired on and sank ROK PCE-56 <i>Dangpo</i> while it guarded fishing vessels</b> (39 crew members killed and 12 severely wounded)			○
<b>January 21, 1968</b>	<b>31 commandos from North's 124th Unit mounted assault near Cheongwadae, residence of South's president</b> (29 killed, one caught, and one escaped)	○		
<b>January 23, 1968</b>	<b>USS <i>Pueblo</i>, U.S. Naval intelligence ship, captured by North in international waters</b> (all crew members, except for one who was killed, returned home on December 23, 1968)	○		
<b>October 30, 1968</b>	<b>120 armed members from North's Special Forces infiltrated Uljin and Samcheok</b> (107 killed, seven caught, and six escaped)	○		
<b>April 15, 1969</b>	<b>U.S. EC-121 reconnaissance plane was shot down while carrying out a reconnaissance mission above international waters southeast of Cheongjin</b> (all 31 crew members killed)	○		
<b>June 22, 1970</b>	<b>Accidental detonation of explosive planted on roof of entrance to National Cemetery in Seoul</b> (one agent killed and two escaped)		○	
<b>August 15, 1974</b>	<b>Mun Se-kwang, pro-Pyongyang resident from Japan, attempted to assassinate President Park Chung-hee in Seoul's National Theater during ceremony commemorating liberation</b> (first lady Yuk Yeong-su killed)		○	
<b>August 18, 1976</b>	<b>Axe murder incident at Panmunjom</b> (two U.S. officers hacked to death and four U.S. enlisted men and four KATUSA soldiers injured)	○		
<b>July 14, 1977</b>	<b>U.S. CH-47 strayed into North's airspace near east coast and was shot down</b> (three U.S. servicemen killed and one survivor returned)	○		



Classification	Description	War-Risk	Terror	Maritime
October 9, 1983	The explosion of a bomb, several minutes before President Chun Doo-hwan was to arrive at the Martyr's Mausoleum in Rangoon, Burma (17 senior officials killed)		○	
December 3, 1983	North's spy ship caught and sunk while trying to infiltrate beach in Dadaepo, Busan (two crew members caught)			○
September 14, 1986	Arrival area of Gimpo Airport partially destroyed by explosives (five civilians killed and 33 wounded)		○	
January 15, 1987	Fishing vessel <i>Dongjin-ho</i> with 12 fishermen aboard hijacked forcefully while fishing in international waters off Baengnyeong Island		○	
November 29, 1987	Korean Air flight KAL 858 blown up in midair by North's agents (all 115 aboard killed)		○	
January 28, 1989	Fishing vessels No. 37 <i>Taeyang-ho</i> with 12 fishermen aboard and No. 38 <i>Taeyang-ho</i> with 10 fishermen aboard hijacked forcefully while fishing in international waters		○	
September 2, 1995	Two agents from North's Workers' Party infiltrated beach in Onpyeong-ri, Jeju Island		○	
April 5, 1996	North's soldiers, estimated between one or two companies, demonstrated military power in the Joint Security Area at Panmunjom	○		
September 16, 1996	Sango-class submarine from North's Reconnaissance Bureau captured while infiltrating beach in Daepodong, Gangneung (one caught, 13 killed, 11 committed suicide, and one submarine captured)			○
August 2, 1997	Two agents from North's Workers' Party infiltrated beach in Galgot-ri, Geoje Island		○	
October 17, 1997	Two Southern residents in Daeseongdong Village close to border taken to North while working in field (returned to South on October 20, 1997)		○	
June 21, 1998	Yogo-class submarine from North's Workers' Party captured while infiltrating beach in Yangyang-gun, Gangwon-do (all nine aboard committed suicide and one submarine captured)			○

Classification	Description	War-Risk	Terror	Maritime
November 20, 1998	A small speed boat from North's Workers' Party attempted to infiltrate beach in Seonsuri, Ganghwa Island but fled when spotted			○
December 17, 1998	North's submersible boat sunk while trying to infiltrate beach in Dolsan Island, Yeosu (bodies of six crew members recovered and one submersible boat captured)			○
June 15, 1999	1st Yeonpyeong Naval Campaign broke out after North's patrol boat crossed NLL and started to shoot at ROK navy ships			○
June 29, 2002	2nd Yeonpyeong Naval Campaign broke out after North's patrol boat crossed NLL and launched surprise attack on ROK navy ships			○
November 10, 2009	Daecheong Naval Campaign broke out after North's patrol boat crossed NLL and launched surprise attack on ROK navy ships			○
March 26, 2010	ROK Ship <i>Cheonan</i> , from the 2nd Fleet, sunk by North's torpedo attack 2.5km south of Baengnyeong Island (46 crew members killed)			○
November 23, 2010	Coastal artillery guns and multiple rocket launchers of North's 4th Corps fired shells at Yeonpyeong Island (two soldiers and two civilians killed and 16 soldiers and many civilians wounded)			○

Table 3. Major Provocations Against South Korea<sup>14</sup>

Although the types of provocations during particular periods are not completely identical, given the rough and broad similarities of their characteristics, the North's provocations after the war can be divided into three periods. First, in the early postwar years, Pyongyang, without hesitating to wage war, carried out ruthless surprise attacks against Seoul in various places involving air, sea, and land. The typical examples of this period were the raid on Cheongwadae, the *Pueblo* incident, and the Uljin and Samcheok armed infiltrations, all of which occurred in 1968. These provocations caused huge losses of both life and property by applying relatively large-scale military tools in unimaginable

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, *2010 Defense White Paper*, 314–315.

manners, and even targeted U.S. forces on occasion. In sum, the Kim regime intended to undermine the ROK and U.S. governments and induce their extensive responses by employing those daring provocative actions, any of which could have escalated into all-out war.

Second, between the 1970s and the mid-1990s, the number of terrorist attacks on air and land that posed a threat to the South's leadership and bolstered social unrest increased remarkably. For example, the assassination attempt on President Park in 1974, the Rangoon bomb blast in 1983, and the bombing of KAL 858 in 1987 were the most vicious terrorist attacks in this period. The Kim regime chose terrorism as a mean of provocation to administer overwhelming physical and psychological shocks to the South and achieve its political goals without causing a war crisis. As a result, the agents, intentions, and objectives of these provocations were hard to discern immediately, and sometimes the South Korean government could not even respond or retaliate against the incidents because they took place overseas through various channels. Indeed, Pyongyang completely utilized the exceptional advantages of terrorism while Seoul became a victim of those merciless attacks.

Third, after the mid-1990s, North Korea executed meticulously planned limited military actions such as infiltration, raid, and engagement, and those were gradually concentrated on the sea. The first and second Yeonpyeong Naval Campaigns in 1999 and 2002, the sinking of the ROK vessel *Cheonan* in 2010, and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in 2010 were the major maritime provocations of this period. Because the two Koreas have not reached an agreement on the Northern Limited Line of the sea area, their naval powers have been operating in close proximity to one another, without any buffer zone between them. Therefore, the North's forces could provoke military clashes easily in this area, and it was also easy to legitimize their provocations by attributing all the causes to the South. These are the reason why the sea was spotlighted as the main place of provocations in this period. Though these physical provocations involved the possibility of causing war in the peninsula ultimately, the North Korean regime deterred the expansion of crises by concealing and denying its commitment of provocations or

shifting the blame onto the South. This periodic division of the North's provocations is summarized in Table 4.

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Major Provocations</b>
<b>Period of Triggering War</b> (after war–1960s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Raid on Cheongwadae</b> (January 21, 1968)</li> <li>· <b><i>Pueblo</i> Incident</b> (January 23, 1968)</li> <li>· <b>Uljin and Samcheok Infiltration</b> (October 30, 1968)</li> </ul>
<b>Period of Committing Terror</b> (1970s–mid-1990s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Assassination Attempt on President Park</b> (August 15, 1974)</li> <li>· <b>Rangoon Bomb Blast</b> (October 9, 1983)</li> <li>· <b>Bombing of KAL 858</b> (November 29, 1987)</li> </ul>
<b>Period of Provoking Maritime Conflict</b> (mid-1990s–present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Yeonpyeong Naval Campaigns</b> (June 15, 1999 and June 29, 2002)</li> <li>· <b>Sinking of <i>Cheonan</i></b> (March 26, 2010)</li> <li>· <b>Shelling of Yeonpyeong</b> (November 23, 2010)</li> </ul>

Table 4. Periodic Division of Provocations

### **III. PERIOD OF TRIGGERING WAR: AFTER WAR TO 1960s**

Because the three years of the Korean War caused enormous damage to the two Koreas, they had to focus on restoring the damage and stabilizing domestic situations. Since they pursued very different ideologies as their ruling principles, they came to regard their survival and prosperity as intimately linked to showing which ideology was superior to the other. This mindset mirrored the larger trend of the Cold War system. Thus, Pyongyang was forced to make the optimal decisions that could effectively turn this unstable and competitive situation in its favor.

According to this situational condition, North Korea conducted large-scale military provocations with unprecedented boldness and brutality from the end of the war to the late 1960s. This active and aggressive tendency was encouraged by the North's confidence, and stemmed from its relatively superior economic and military power compared to its disastrously ruined adversary. Moreover, the regime stability achieved by Kim Il-sung's absolute dictatorship and the practical profits from the diplomacy with China and the Soviet Union also contributed to this tendency. Kim, therefore, could carry out the powerful provocations that could escalate to war if the South chose retaliation against them. These audacious movements suggest that he intended to place the blame for war on Seoul, in case of all-out war. In this context, this chapter analyzes the four decisive factors of policy making on the basis of the idea that these typical characteristics of provocations in this period were formed by the North's crisis policy-making process.

#### **A. MILITARY STRENGTH**

Since the top priority of the North Korean regime during the 1950s was to set up the basic structure of the state as soon as possible, it placed more importance on economic recovery and political stability than military buildup. This, however, does not mean that the North's military strength in this period had not been improved. Although the North Korean leadership's concern concentrated mainly on facing political and economic issues, the enormous amount of aid and assistance from its two socialist allies developed the Korean People's Army (KPA) considerably. For example, thanks to the

Chinese forces, which had been stationed in North Korea until October 1958 and maintained a combined command system with the KPA, the Kim regime could devote its energies to economic development without the pressures associated with establishing advanced military capabilities on its own.

Furthermore, the mass introduction of arms from the Soviet Union played an important role in achieving the qualitative evolution of the KPA. Between 1951 and 1956, about 2,000 tanks and self-propelled guns (such as T-54, IS-2, ISU-122, and SU-100) were provided to North Korea by the Soviet forces. Over the same period, Kim also received 800 Soviet aircraft, including fighters such as the MiG-15, MiG-17, and Yak-9 as well as interceptors, bombers, and helicopters.<sup>15</sup> This reinforcement of air power and introduction of advanced weapons led to the marked progress of the KPA, and formed the essential foundation for its conventional military strength.

From the 1960s on, however, North Korea started to pursue its own military buildup policies. The reason for this change was that the security vacuum created by the withdrawal of the Chinese forces in the late 1950s, and the establishment of the South Korean military regime in 1961, was perceived as an obvious crisis to the Kim regime. Moreover, as Pyongyang adopted a pro-China line during the Sino-Soviet dispute, the Soviet Union cut off its military assistance to the KPA. This meant that North Korea had to develop a self-reliant defense capability from 1962 onward.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the formation of the U.S.-Japan-ROK military alliance system following the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea in 1965, and the worsening of the Sino-DPRK relations by the Chinese Cultural Revolution in 1966, increased the North's need for independent military buildup. While these internal defense capabilities developed in the DPRK, the ROK weakened its defense posture somewhat by the dispatch of troops to the Vietnam War. This reality could be perceived as a favorable opportunity for North Korea to conquer the South by force. The DPRK's new defense

---

<sup>15</sup> Kwang-soo Kim, "The Establishment and Development of the Korean People's Army, 1945–1990," in *The Military of North Korea: A New Look*, ed. University of North Korean Studies, Kyungnam University (Seoul: Hanul, 2006), 114.

<sup>16</sup> Dae-sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 203–210.

policies reflecting these diverse situational perceptions were initiated by the Economy and Military Catching-up Line and 4 Main Military Line, which were adopted by the Central Committee (CC) of the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) in December 1962.<sup>17</sup>

The North's defense spending and large regular forces that increased markedly during the 1960s were the tangible proof of these military buildup policies. Indeed, the percentage of defense spending as a share of the budget was 2.6 percent in 1961, 5.8 percent in 1964, and 10 percent in 1966; finally, it reached and began to stay above 30 percent from 1967 on. Due to this growing military investment, the Kim regime, since the mid-1960s, could maintain more than 440,000 regular troops (390,000 in the army, 10,000 in the navy, and 38,000 in the air force). This rising trend of defense spending and the number of troops was clearly evident in the comparison with the ROK forces, as shown in Table 5.<sup>18</sup>

<b>Classifi- Cation</b>	<b>South Korea (A)</b>		<b>North Korea (B)</b>		<b>A/B Ratio (%)</b>	
	<b>Troops (10,000)</b>	<b>Defense Budget (USD millions)</b>	<b>Troops (10,000)</b>	<b>Defense Budget (USD millions)</b>	<b>Troops</b>	<b>Defense Budget</b>
<b>1953</b>	<b>59.1</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>?</b>
<b>1955</b>	<b>72.0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>41.0</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>?</b>
<b>1960</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>39.0</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>1965</b>	<b>60.4</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>41.1</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>1969</b>	<b>64.5</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>46.7</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>44</b>

Table 5. Comparison of the Military Strength of the Two Koreas (1953–1969)<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Korean Central News Agency, *Chosun Central Yearbook 1964* (Pyongyang: Korean Central News Agency, 1964), 4; Kim Il-sung, *Kim Il Sung: Work 17* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1984), 372–386.

<sup>18</sup> The Institute for Far Eastern Studies, *The Collection on North Korea* (Seoul: The Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 1974), 51. Ibid., Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea: Continuity and Change* (Seoul: Hanul, 2005), 133.

<sup>19</sup> Taik-young Hamm, *Political Economy of National Security: State Power and Armament of the Two Koreas* (Seoul: Bobmunsa, 1998), 152–153; Taik-young Hamm, “State Power and Armament of the Two Koreas: A Case Study” (Doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, 1996), 107–135.

These massed military forces were organized to wage all types of war (e.g., regular war, unconventional war, modern war, and guerrilla war). For starters, the ground forces had three front corps and two rear corps, organized into 19 infantry divisions and seven infantry brigades, and they also maintained separate commands such as a mechanized command equipped with the latest tanks and self-propelled guns and an artillery command equipped with field artillery and anti-aircraft guns. The DPRK navy, though the majority of its assets were small vessels, already had four submarines and maintained four naval bases and 20 squadrons. The air force was organized into four fighter wings and one anti-aircraft artillery unit, and also possessed a large number of advanced fighters, including 56 MiG-21, through the steady modernization of equipment from the 1950s. Furthermore, the KPA sought to militarize the whole society by establishing several reserve troops such as the Worker and Peasant Red Guard in 1957, Reserve Military Training Unit in 1962, and Red Youth Guard in 1970.<sup>20</sup>

In sum, the Chinese and Soviet military assistance and the North's self-reliant military buildup policies, which were conducted in earnest during the 1950s and the 1960s, achieved substantial results despite the adverse political and economic environment after the war. Though the North's objective number of troops was inferior to that of the ROK troops, the Kim regime could hold the lead in military strength by using its outstanding qualitative superiority.

## **B. RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND THE SOVIET UNION**

From the end of the war to the late 1960s, North Korea's overall foreign policies can be summarized as the change from socialist states' encampment diplomacy to independent and multilateral diplomacy. During the era of encampment diplomacy, the priority goal of the North's diplomacy was to secure, from the socialist world, sufficient aid for postwar recovery, so the Kim regime promoted its foreign policy under the definite influence of the socialist superpowers.<sup>21</sup> After that, as its national power

---

<sup>20</sup> Chun-sung Cho, *The North* (Seoul: Koryo, 1969), 199–202. Ibid., Kwang-soo Kim, "The Establishment and Development of the Korean People's Army," 140.

<sup>21</sup> Kyu-sup Jeong, *North Korea's Foreign Policy: Past and Present* (Seoul: Ilshinsa, 1997), 25.



gradually recovered, it developed a self-reliant position and implemented independent diplomacy to avoid external intervention, and also pursued multilateral diplomacy to form broad and comprehensive foreign relations.

During the 1950s, socialist states' encampment diplomacy, which was the outcome of ideological conflicts spanning most of the globe during the Cold War, was stably maintained in North Korea. Yet, since these dependent foreign relations could be easily swayed by the influence of great powers, their eternal stability was fundamentally uncertain. Indeed, the Kim regime was placed in an embarrassing diplomatic situation because of the Sino-Soviet rivalry, which had been sparked by the ideological dispute in the late 1950s. However, by implementing balanced foreign policies between the two giant powers, Pyongyang could take advantage of this confrontation and maximize its interests. For example, in July 1961, Kim negotiated and signed the Mutual Aid and Cooperation Friendship Treaty with the Soviet Union and China, in succession. These treaties guaranteed one side's unconditional military aid for the other side when the latter was involved in wars against third countries or unions.<sup>22</sup> This encampment diplomacy, by settling the North's security unstableness, created a favorable environment in which North Korea could build up national power, and Kim especially emphasized the nuclear deterrence capabilities provided by the Soviet Union as the major success of these relations.<sup>23</sup>

The split of the socialist camp and precarious international situations in the 1960s, however, made Pyongyang shift to an independent and self-reliant diplomatic line. Many issues occurring around North Korea in this period contributed to this change in foreign policy. Kim, for example, criticized the Soviet revisionism that insisted on peaceful coexistence with America, and was wary of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) that could make North Korea economically subordinate to the Soviet Union. In addition to this, Kim witnessed when Nikita Khrushchev condemned the Albanian regime's cult of personality and withdrew diplomats in November 1961, and

---

<sup>22</sup> The Institute for Far Eastern Studies, *The Collection on North Korea*, 283–284.

<sup>23</sup> University of North Korean Studies, *The Military of North Korea: A New Look*, 128.

worried that the same accusation would be brought against him.<sup>24</sup> Above all, the Soviet surrender to the United States in the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis became the determining cause of the North's anti-Soviet attitude, which finally caused Pyongyang to abandon encampment diplomacy and advocate a self-reliant foreign policy.

The core agendas of this diplomatic self-reliance were the mutual respect and non-intervention between the socialist countries and the guarantee about their equality and autonomy. To realize these ideas, the DPRK, at the Second Party Representatives Conference in October 1966, formally declared the self-reliant diplomatic line, which has continued until now, by claiming complete equality and autonomy in foreign relations. Kim also pointed out that the primary cause of the division of the international communist movement was Soviet revisionism and Chinese doctrinism, and then emphasized that socialist countries should reject left and right opportunism in their lines to avoid diplomatic mistakes.<sup>25</sup> In the same vein, Pyongyang expressed its strong support for the communist government in North Vietnam by criticizing the Soviet opportunistic and selfish behaviors that, Kim maintained, made the USSR hesitate in providing aid for Hanoi.<sup>26</sup>

Beyond this, the Kim regime, on the basis of multilateral diplomacy, tried to establish broad foreign relations with diverse countries. In this context, the DPRK showed its intention to form economic and cultural relations with the countries having different social systems and ideologies, and continued to promote active foreign policies of engaging the Third World countries. Indeed, it put much effort into developing relations with capitalist countries including Japan, but made little progress.<sup>27</sup> Rather, it reacted sensitively to the ROK-Japan Normalization Talks from 1961 to 1965 and denounced the restoration of their relations.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea*, 127.

<sup>25</sup> Kim Il-sung, *Kim Il Sung: Work 20* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1984), 319–350

<sup>26</sup> Kyu-sup Jeong, *North Korea's Foreign Policy*, 110.

<sup>27</sup> Korean Central News Agency, *Chosun Central Yearbook 1964*, 164; Korean Central News Agency, *Chosun Central Yearbook 1965*, 486.

<sup>28</sup> Korean Central News Agency, *Chosun Central Yearbook 1962*, 216.

After all, until the 1950s, the DPRK had been in a confused diplomatic situation due to the overlap between its dependent foreign policies and the collapse of the socialist camp. Through the neutral and calculated diplomatic strategy toward the Sino-Soviet rivalry, however, the Kim regime could obtain practical interests from both nations. On the other hand, from the 1960s, by pursuing an independent and self-reliant diplomatic line, it could deter external interference as well as establish itself as one of the sovereign countries against the prosperity of the liberalist camp.

### **C. REGIME STABILITY**

In a continual struggle over ideology between North and South Korea, the decisive objective of both governments was to ensure regime stability, which could guarantee their survival. The 1950s and the 1960s, in particular, were the crucial periods for Kim, during which he could establish a foundation for dictatorship and strengthen his base of political support, which had been undermined by the failure of war. To achieve these goals, the Kim regime not only reformed its political structures through the sweeping purge against the opposition forces but also eliminated the Soviet and Chinese leverage over its domestic politics. In comparison with the South's conflicting political situation, North Korea was in a stable circumstance once most of the regime-threatening elements were removed successfully.

First, by purging the opposition politicians, Kim could evade his responsibility for the defeat in the war and reduce political challenges to the regime in advance. Of course, Kim had already seized the actual power of country and party before the war, but several opposition groups having different political tendencies and roots did exist among the leadership, and were threatening Kim's position. Hence, he focused on minimizing their influence and authority during the war and then directly conducted massive purges after the war. For example, in early 1953, he purged Park Hun-young, who was the head of the South Korean Workers' Party, under suspicion of spying for the United States; this

became a harbinger of the purge against the Soviet Faction and the Yen-an Faction in August 1956.<sup>29</sup>

Even after this, political conflicts with the opposition groups continued for a while, but Kim suppressed their efforts with tighter controls. For instance, the Yen-an Faction criticized that Kim's heavy industry-centered economic policy would lead to deterioration in light industry and agriculture, and the Soviet Faction also opposed the policy by noting the Soviet skeptical response.<sup>30</sup> Above this, these groups made continuous attacks against the regime's cult of personality and the recession of people's life, but Kim suppressed these criticisms successfully by purging about 80 key figures of the party, administration, and military after the August Factionalist Incident in 1956.<sup>31</sup> After this, in the 1960s, by giving high-ranking positions of the KWP to his supporters and military leaders who had fought together in the anti-Japanese movement, he could solidify his power base and promote military buildup policies at the same time.

Secondly, deterring external interventions was also one of the foremost conditions for the Kim regime's stability. The opposition groups, which had been actively involved in political activities from the beginnings of the regime, were the foreign-oriented political powers supporting the Soviet and Chinese interference. Moreover, those two nations' military aid and assistance during the Korean War justified their leverage on the North's domestic affairs. After witnessing the collapse of the socialist bloc, however, Kim began to make an effort to recover the regime's sovereignty by phasing out its reliance on the two powers. For starters, he denounced the spoil of the ideology in the socialist powers through the anti-Stalin movement and then emphasized the necessity of self-reliant philosophy replacing foreign ideas.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, in May 1967, the Kim regime imposed its own socialist idea, the *Juche* ideology, which said that the Korean masses were the masters of the country's development, with the intention of creating a

---

<sup>29</sup> Choeng Seong Chang, *Ideology Et System En Coree Du Nord* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), 86–135. Ibid., Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea*, 110–111.

<sup>30</sup> Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea*, 111–112.

<sup>31</sup> Chong-Sik Lee, "Kim Il-Song of North Korea," *Asian Survey* 7, no. 6 (1967): 379–382.

<sup>32</sup> Dongailbo, *North Korea Viewed in Source Material, 1945–1988* (Seoul: Dongailbo, 1989), 145–154.

single governing system in which one leader had all power of governing.<sup>33</sup> Finally, all of these actions helped the DPRK achieve complete independence from the influence of foreign powers and become a stable, autonomous regime.

On the other hand, the South's political circumstance was fairly chaotic compared to the North's prompt postwar recovery and successful ideological reform. Of course, the active economic and military assistance of the United States, which tried to guard the liberalist camp, made Syngman Rhee's government gain effective defense capabilities and use them politically for the regime's survival.<sup>34</sup> He also could easily legitimize his rule by claiming the absolute governing principles: deterring communist expansion and protecting democracy. Yet, his illegal political activities and persistent factious quarrels gradually aggravated the regime's instability. Finally, hoping to clean up this disorganized mess created by Rhee, Park Chung-hee brought himself into power under a military coup d'état on May 16, 1961. Despite this move, the fundamental stability of the South's regime was getting harder to secure due to its move to military dictatorship and suppression of democracy.

In sum, it can be concluded that Pyongyang gained ground in the competition for regime stability over its rival, Seoul. The Kim regime could eliminate the challenges from the opposition political groups through wholesale purges and separate from the Soviet and Chinese influence by establishing the *Juche* ideology as its own socialist philosophy. Furthermore, this reinforcement of the political base and stabilization of the regime stood out vividly against the South's unsuccessful political progress and squabbling elites.

---

<sup>33</sup> Korean Workers' Party, *The History of Korean Workers' Party* (Pyongyang: Korean Workers' Party Press, 1991), 431.

<sup>34</sup> Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea*, 117.

#### D. ECONOMIC POWER

North Korea's economic development after the war was gradually achieved by the socialist planned economy system. After experiencing the loss of infrastructure and growth engines during the war, Pyongyang proceeded with the three-year plan from 1954 to 1956, seeking to rehabilitate its economy and return to the pre-war level. As a result of this plan, by 1956, the North's industrial production increased 2.8 times compared to 1953, with an annual growth rate of 41.7 percent, and also its grain production increased 19 percent compared to 1949. The main cause of this initial success of the economic plan was the massive aid from the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern European countries. This plan, by laying the solid foundation for a socialist economy, enabled the DPRK to perform successfully during the following plans.<sup>35</sup>

The next economic plan, from 1957 to 1962, was the first five-year plan, which formed the root of the North's planned economy system.<sup>36</sup> This plan could gain strength and maximize its outcomes through the Kim regime's massive manpower mobilization program, the *Chollima* Movement, which "aimed at tapping into the revolutionary fervor of the North Korean workers in order to increase output in all sectors of the economy."<sup>37</sup> Because of this, North Korea could boost its economy above the level of the pre-war period and finalize its transformation into a stable socialist country having basic economic power. For example, during the first four years, the North's industrial production increased 3.5 times, with an annual growth rate of 36.6 percent (power production 1.8 times, fuel production 2.8 times, machine production 4.7 times, and extractive industries 2.6 times).<sup>38</sup> Finally, "the North Korean authorities proudly declared the achievement of the major targets of the five-year plan two years ahead of schedule."<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Doowon Lee, "Assessing North Korean Economic Reform: Historical Trajectory, Opportunities, and Constraints," *Pacific Focus* 8, no. 2 (1993): 10–12.

<sup>36</sup> Chang-hee Kim, *Understanding North Korean Policy and Society* (Seoul: Bobmunsa, 2006), 83.

<sup>37</sup> Doowon Lee, "Assessing North Korean Economic Reform," 13.

<sup>38</sup> Hak-joon Kim, *Fifty Year History of North Korea* (Seoul: Donga, 1995), 206–207.

<sup>39</sup> Doowon Lee, "Assessing North Korean Economic Reform," 13.

After that, the Kim regime established the first seven-year plan of 1961 to 1967 at the 4th convention of the Workers' Party in 1961. The major policy goals of this plan were to attain substantial promotion of heavy industry and overall improvement of people's economy.<sup>40</sup> In other words, he tried to build up a more advanced and affluent country on the basis of the strengthened material and technical foundation for socialism. Hence, the basic tasks of this plan were to improve productivity by revolutionizing all sectors of the people's economy and lead them to enjoy the benefits of civilization by improving their life. To reflect these objectives, this plan was designed to take seven years instead of five years.

This plan, however, inevitably had to be fixed as the need for military buildup was growing due to the rapidly changing world situations. The deteriorating Sino-Soviet rivalry, the progress of the Vietnam War, and the establishment of a military regime in South Korea were examples of the changing situation. In particular, Kim's New Year message in 1965 and the *Rodong Sinmun* editorial in 1966, which said that economic development was delayed by military buildup, proved that this seven-year plan had been disrupted. Indeed, the North Korean regime modified the plan to strengthen both economy and military and worked hard to expand its military power by spending about 30 percent of the entire budget on the military between 1967 and 1969.<sup>41</sup> Thus, though this economic plan seemed to pursue the completion of industrialization and the achievement of a self-sustaining economy, it actually focused on constructing the industrial foundation that could physically support its 4 Main Military Line.

Given its economic achievement, acquired through the socialist planned economy system during the 1950s and the 1960s, North Korea accomplished successful postwar recovery and built a solid economic foundation. These results were helped by the systematic economic development plans, preceded by the Soviet and Chinese security assistance and the state-led productivity drive such as the *Chollima* Movement. Pyongyang, though the aggravated security instability caused an additional investment in

---

<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Information, Republic of Korea, *North Korea's Economy and Life* (Seoul: Ministry of Information, Republic of Korea, 1993), 36–37.

<sup>41</sup> In-hak Baek, "The Course of North Korean Socialism," in *North Korea's Policy and Society*, ed. Eun-ho Lee and Young-jae Kim (Seoul: Seoul Press, 1994), 169.

military buildup, enjoyed superior economic power over Seoul, which was suffering from social unrest and economic depression. The disparity in economic power between the two countries is as follows:

<b>Classification</b>		<b>1953</b>	<b>1957</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1962</b>	<b>1964</b>
<b>GNP</b> (USD billions)	<b>South</b> (A)	<b>1.35</b>	<b>1.67</b>	<b>1.95</b>	<b>2.32</b>	<b>2.88</b>
	<b>North</b> (B)	<b>0.44</b>	<b>0.94</b>	<b>1.52</b>	<b>2.02</b>	<b>2.30</b>
	<b>A/B</b> <b>Ratio</b> (%)	<b>307</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>GNP</b> <b>Per</b> <b>Capita</b> (USD)	<b>South</b> (A)	<b>76</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>107</b>
	<b>North</b> (B)	<b>58</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>194</b>
	<b>A/B</b> <b>Ratio</b> (%)	<b>131</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>55</b>

Table 6. Comparison of GNP Per Capita of the Two Koreas (1953–1964)<sup>42</sup>

## E. CORRELATION WITH THE TYPE OF PROVOCATION

If the major provocations of this period are considered, North Korea seemed to try to trigger the South Korean government by committing relatively threatening local provocations and challenging military actions. In other words, Kim intended to create an unstable condition, which could bring about a full-scale war on the peninsula, on the assumption that these unacceptable provocations might make Seoul respond aggressively and use force on its own or with Washington. This analysis of the North's political intention during this period is supported by the aforementioned four decisive factors of policy making in a crisis.

<sup>42</sup> Korea Institute for National Unification, *Comparison of National Power of the Two Koreas* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 1992), 233.



First, the socialist powers' military assistance in the early postwar years and the North's self-reliant military buildup from the 1960s qualitatively modernized and improved the KPA. The massive Soviet arms aid and the Chinese forces' stationed in North Korea not only led to the KPA's substantial growth but also helped Pyongyang concentrate on its postwar recovery. Although it experienced an abrupt security vacuum due to the split of the socialist camp, it could maintain superior military strength to the ROK forces by increasing its defense budget and reforming the military structure on the basis of its own military buildup policies and the 4 Main Military Line.

Second, North Korea succeeded in maximizing its national interests under the influence of the socialist superpowers and being recognized as an autonomous sovereign country. The Soviet-Sino rivalry forced the Kim regime to make a strategic choice, but it strove to maintain the diplomatic balance between the two countries and derive benefit through the Mutual Aid and Cooperation Friendship Treaty with them. Furthermore, as the socialist camp started to collapse and the revisionism appeared in the socialist ideas, North Korea pursued self-reliant and multilateral diplomacy and secured international recognition for its national sovereignty.

Third, Kim stabilized his dictatorship by purging the influential opposition groups and deterring the external political intervention. Some of the political forces, which had grown with Soviet or Chinese support in the formation of the regime, had dissenting views to Kim's forceful ruling, and the regime's political and economic dependence on the two socialist powers prevented it from exercising its authority. All of these potential vulnerabilities and threats, however, were eliminated effectively by the active political oppression and the establishment of the *Juche* idea, which is the North's own socialist philosophy.

Fourth, the DPRK accomplished phenomenal economic growth through the sequential economic development plans. Thanks to the economic and security assistance from the socialist camp, Pyongyang successfully completed its three-year plan and recovered to the pre-war economic level. Above all, following two economic plans from 1957 to 1967, despite their partial modification caused by security issues, facilitated rapid

industrial growth and led to the overall increase of national wealth and technological progress.

In summary, from the end of the Korean War until the late 1960s, North Korea achieved the positive outcomes it wanted in all aspects of military strength, relations with China and the Soviet Union, regime stability, and economic power. The practical foreign relations with the socialist powers and the solid *Juche* ideology assisted the Kim regime in maintaining political and diplomatic stability and repeating striking development in the fields of economy and military. On the other hand, the political situation of South Korea was precarious, and its defense capability was vulnerable due to the troop deployments to Vietnam. Indeed, the South's absolute inferiority in both economy and military made the DPRK retain overall supremacy and strong self-confidence.

Given these advantageous decisive factors, it can be concluded that the Kim regime applied the *fait accompli* strategy to determine its provocation type during this period. George, the originator of the theory, writes that the *fait accompli* strategy is an offensive crisis management strategy that the challengers try to adopt to change the status quo by using their overwhelming forces and taking quick, decisive actions when they have the confidence to finish engagements in a short period by making more gains than losses.<sup>43</sup> In the same vein, North Korea chose drastic and threatening provocations on the basis of its sufficient confidence to bear and manage the South's retaliation and resolve the unstable situation stemming from the division of Korea, and this policy making could be explained by the *fait accompli* strategy. Consequently, the North's major provocations that realized this strategic decision were the raid on Cheongwadae, the *Pueblo* incident, and the Uljin and Samcheok armed infiltration in 1968; the correlation between the decisive factors and the provocation type is summarized in Figure 1.

---

<sup>43</sup> George, *Avoiding War*, 382–383.

Independent Variables			Dependent Variables
	<b>Decisive Factors of Crisis Policy Making</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Provocation Type</b>
<b>Military Strength</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Socialist Powers' Military Assistance</li> <li>· Self-Reliant Military Buildup and 4 Main Military Line</li> </ul>	<b>Advantageous</b>	<b>Fait Accompli Strategy</b> ↓ <b>Triggering War</b>
<b>Foreign Relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Balanced and Pragmatic Diplomacy between the Soviet Union and China</li> <li>· Self-Reliant and Multilateral Foreign Policy</li> </ul>	<b>Advantageous</b>	
<b>Regime Stability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Purge of Opposition Forces</li> <li>· Establishment of <i>Juche</i> Ideology</li> </ul>	<b>Advantageous</b>	
<b>Economic Power</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Economic Development Plans</li> <li>· Manpower Mobilization Program, <i>Chollima</i> Movement</li> </ul>	<b>Advantageous</b>	

Figure 1. Correlation between Decisive Factors and Provocation Type (after War to 1960s)

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

#### IV. PERIOD OF COMMITTING TERROR: 1970S TO MID-1990S

By the late 1960s, and despite the DPRK's bold and brutal provocations, South Korea's capabilities to react to them gradually improved. Rather than weakening the South, the North's aggression served to strengthen it. In response to the ongoing military actions of Pyongyang, Washington allocated troops, originally earmarked for Vietnam, to South Korea again and pledged \$100 million in military aid to the ROK forces.<sup>44</sup> In addition, Seoul achieved unprecedented rapid economic growth, called the Miracle on the Han River, and dominated Pyongyang in the aspect of diplomatic power by successfully hosting major international events such as the Asian Games and the Olympic Games. Although North Korea firmly maintained the foundation of its dictatorship through continuous military buildup policies and Kim Il-sung's monolithic ideology system, the South's remarkable development and improved international position made Pyongyang reassess its crisis policy making.

For those reasons, the North's major provocations, since the 1970s, started to take the form of terrorism that could hinder the South's economic growth and produce social disorder. Indeed, from the 1970s to the mid-1990s, large-scale military provocations seeking to trigger war decreased, whereas elaborately prepared terrorist attacks increased. This change in the type of provocation meant that the DPRK sought a new way of policy making to solve the increasing economic gap and the unfavorable international environment. Looked at pragmatically, this is not surprising. By committing terror, North Korea could, with a little effort damage the South's global image and destroy its leadership without being easily detected. In this context, this chapter analyzes the correlation between the four decisive factors that Pyongyang faced during this period and its policy making that chose terrorism as its main mean of provocation.

---

<sup>44</sup> Yung-gap Cho, *National Crisis Management Theory*, 351–352

## A. MILITARY STRENGTH

North Korea consistently implemented military buildup policies with a strong will. Kim stressed prompt, mobilized combat readiness in his New Year messages from 1974 to 1977 and, at the 6th convention of the KWP in 1980, also stated that the DPRK had secured sufficient military capability to repel every possible invasion from adversaries and protect its social system by pursuing a thoroughly self-reliant military line.<sup>45</sup> Above this, Pyongyang politically supported its military buildup policies by extending Kim's military influence, reemphasizing the 4 Main Military Line, and strengthening ideological education in the military; through it all, the regime forced its troops to strengthen their military postures and technologies.

The ultimate objective of these policies was to build a self-reliant defense potential. Accordingly, the DPRK's detailed goals to achieve this were to secure independent armed forces, establish a nationwide defense system, develop its own defense industries, and heighten a security posture in the rear area. Indeed, these goals were gradually achieved by the Kim regime's continuing reinforcement of military personnel and an increasing defense budget; this trend can be proved by the comparison of the military strength of the two Koreas, which is summarized in Table 7. Consequently, these aggressively promoted military buildup policies helped the KPA compensate for its qualitative inferiority to the ROK-U.S. combined forces, by its quantitative superiority to them.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Korean Central News Agency, *Chosun Central Yearbook 1981*, 75.

<sup>46</sup> Kwang-soo Kim, "The Establishment and Development of the Korean People's Army," 152.

<b>Classifi- Cation</b>	<b>South Korea (A)</b>		<b>North Korea (B)</b>		<b>A/B Ratio (%)</b>	
	<b>Troops (10,000)</b>	<b>Defense Budget (USD millions)</b>	<b>Troops (10,000)</b>	<b>Defense Budget (USD millions)</b>	<b>Troops</b>	<b>Defense Budget</b>
<b>1970</b>	<b>64.5</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>46.7</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>1975</b>	<b>63.0</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>56.7</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>1980</b>	<b>63.0</b>	<b>37.1</b>	<b>70.0</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>1985</b>	<b>63.0</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>78.4</b>	<b>34.3</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>1990</b>	<b>65.5</b>	<b>93.8</b>	<b>99.0</b>	<b>49.6</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>1992</b>	<b>65.5</b>	<b>107.7</b>	<b>101.0</b>	<b>55.4</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>194</b>

Table 7. Comparison of Military Strength of the Two Koreas (1970–1992)<sup>47</sup>

In terms of managing military power, North Korea tried to construct the military structure appropriate for the KPA to conduct combination warfare, in which forces carried out both regular and irregular battles at once. For starters, since the 1970s, the DPRK hugely expanded irregular warfare units and trained them intensively. As Kim's monolithic ideology was emphasized in the early 1970s, his partisan tactics during the anti-Japanese war also came into the spotlight. On the basis of this trend, Chief of the General Staff Oh Chin-u developed the KPA's ability to wage combination warfare by giving more weight to guerrilla war. For example, the KPA assigned clearly defined missions to each special unit by reorganizing the existing VIII Special Corps; by 1978, this unit possessed 15 special brigades including eight light infantry brigades, three sniper brigades, three airborne brigades, and one amphibious sniper brigade.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the

<sup>47</sup> Taik-young Hamm, *Political Economy of National Security*, 152–153; Taik-young Hamm, "State Power and Armament of the Two Koreas," 135–147.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph S. Bermidez Jr., *North Korean Special Forces* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 104–114.

DPRK tried to make these troops deployable into the South's rear area swiftly by secretly digging several underground tunnels across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

Since the late 1970s, Pyongyang focused on completing its preparations for combination warfare by reinforcing regular warfare units. To achieve this, Chief of the General Staff Oh Keuk-ryul, who stood high in Kim Jong-il's favor, carried out the Soviet-style reforms of regular warfare forces in 1976; these forces started to increase noticeably in number and size, as shown in Table 8. Moreover, they were structured for mobile warfare by being equipped with automated and mechanized weapon systems. This qualitative and quantitative growth of regular warfare forces could be inferred as the outcome of the North's attempt to actualize the concept of the Blitzkrieg tactics by improving their mobility and effectiveness.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, North Korea could achieve balanced development of regular and irregular warfare units, and this military structure assisted the KPA in developing the combination warfare strategy, which was suitable to the geography of the Korean Peninsula.

---

<sup>49</sup> Kwang-soo Kim, "The Establishment and Development of the Korean People's Army," 151–162.



<b>Classification</b>		<b>1976</b>	<b>1978</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1993</b>
<b>Ground</b>	<b>Mechanized Corps</b>					3	3	5	4	4
	<b>Armored Corps</b>					1		1	1	1
	<b>Self-Propelled Artillery Corps</b>					1	1	2	1	1
	<b>Infantry Division</b>	22	20	35	34	24	25	25	30	26
	<b>Armored Division/Brigade</b>	2/·	2/·	2/4	2/5	2/7	15/·	15/·	15/·	14/·
	<b>Motorized Infantry Division/Brigade</b>		3/·	5/·	3/·	5/·	5/20	·/30	·/20	·/23
	<b>Field Army Artillery</b>								8	8
	<b>Corps Artillery</b>								14	14
	<b>Special Corps/Brigade</b>	1/10	1/15	1/22	1/26	1/25	1/22	1/22	1/22	1/22
<b>Navy</b>	<b>Submarine</b>	8	15	16	21	20	21	24	22	25
	<b>Landing Ship</b>	65	90	102	92	128	129	126	131	131
<b>Air Force</b>	<b>Air Transport</b>	100	250	251	272	272	272	280	280	305
	<b>Helicopter</b>	13	60	40	60	170	250	287	327	340

Table 8. Changing Trend of North Korean Major Troops (1976–1993)<sup>50</sup>

The DPRK's constant production and introduction of weapons also contributed to bolstering military power for combination warfare. Kim Il-sung, who stressed *Juche* ideology and self-rehabilitation, tried to foster the North's own defense industries by acquiring the advanced technologies for developing weapons. Of course, given North Korea's poor technological level of those days, it could not completely give up importing

<sup>50</sup> Kwang-soo Kim, "The Establishment and Development of the Korean People's Army," 152.

new weapons from its communist neighbors, but it could steadily improve its capacity to develop simple conventional weapons such as small arms, machine guns, and light artillery. Meanwhile, North Korea introduced the Soviet fighters (MiG-21, MiG-29, and SU-7), missiles (SA-2 and FROG), and tanks (T-54) in the 1970s and the 1980s; this made the KPA able to increase the effect of combination warfare by maximizing the mobility of mechanized and armored corps and securing air superiority.<sup>51</sup>

In sum, it can be concluded that North Korea maintained military superiority over the South during this period by continuing military buildup policies and developing suitable military forces for combination warfare. The KPA, despite its worsening qualitative inferiority to the ROK-U.S. combined forces, could continue its dominance over them through the military buildup policies that guaranteed its quantitative expansion and massive defense spending. Furthermore, it could build both irregular warfare units for deep operations and regular warfare units for rapid mobile war, as the means to pursue a combination warfare strategy. For all these reasons, North Korea, even though it was suffering from severe economic difficulties and international isolation, could have a slightly higher likelihood of winning a potential war with South Korea.

## **B. RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND THE SOVIET UNION**

From the 1970s through the mid-1990s, North Korea's diplomatic relations were greatly affected by the changes in the Cold War system. First, as the new Cold War system was created in the 1970s, Pyongyang could maintain solid relations with the communist camp while the military pressure from the liberalist camp led by the United States increased. Of course, the tensions between the two camps were somewhat eased by several cooperative actions such as the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) in 1972, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in 1973, and the Helsinki Accords of 1975. In the late 1970s, however, the international situation cooled again because of the Soviet arms buildup and invasion of Afghanistan, which were followed by the U.S. response; this new power struggle between them formed the new Cold War system. In response to this, Washington postponed a reduction in the number

---

<sup>51</sup> Taik-young Hamm, *Political Economy of National Security*, 168.

of U.S. forces in Korea, published its plan for the use of nuclear weapons, and initiated the large-scale ROK-U.S. combined exercise: Team Spirit.<sup>52</sup>

After that, as the bipolar system began to collapse, the DPRK's diplomatic situation also deteriorated gradually in the 1980s. During this period, the Sino-Soviet conflict expanded, and Beijing adopted an open-door policy by recovering relations with Washington and Tokyo. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union, after Mikhail Gorbachev was installed as the general secretary of the Communist Party in 1985, tried to thaw the Cold War relations with America and revitalize its ailing economy by promoting exchanges with capitalist countries. In addition, South Korea, which successfully hosted the 1986 Busan Asian Games and the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, secured a more improved international position and expanded diplomatic relations with China, the Soviet Union, and the Third World countries. Plus, as the Gulf War, triggered by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991, ended with an overwhelming U.S. victory, the unipolar moment of American supremacy emerged.<sup>53</sup> All of these changes reduced the North's foreign relations, and made it a more isolated and closed country.

Despite these disadvantageous international situations, the DPRK's traditional friendly relations with China and the Soviet Union continued, shakily, without being severed completely. First, Beijing and Pyongyang kept up the relationship by exchanging reciprocal visits by top leaders and giving political support to each other. For example, Kim Il-sung officially visited China in 1975, 1982, and 1987 and, especially in his informal visit in 1984, discussed the joint struggle against imperialism and asked for Chinese support for the North's unification policy. In response, Hua Guofeng, the president of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), visited Pyongyang in 1978, and Deng Xiaoping, the vice-president, attended the 35th anniversary of North Korea's founding in the same year.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, in the *Rodong Sinmun* editorial in 1989, the DPRK expressed strong support for the CCP's actions in the Tiananmen Square massacre. For its part,

---

<sup>52</sup> Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea*, 149–150.

<sup>53</sup> Kyu-sup Jeong, *North Korea's Foreign Policy*, 129–130.

<sup>54</sup> Dong-gi Shin, "Chinese People Moving Forward the Socialist Way under the CCP's Control," *Global Life*, no. 512 (1990): 30–31.

China did not want to lose its ally that could act as a buffer against capitalist threats.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, even after the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in 1992, the Sino-North Korean alliance continued.

In a similar way, Soviet-North Korean relations encountered several obstacles but were never destroyed. For example, the Soviet open-door policy shaped by Gorbachev, and its establishment of diplomatic relations with South Korea in 1990, inflicted huge political and diplomatic losses on North Korea. The Kim regime regarded these diplomatic ties as a Soviet betrayal, one which ultimately intended to accept two Koreas, bring about the DPRK's isolation, and subvert the socialist system.<sup>56</sup> These events, however, did not mean the collapse of the Soviet-North Korean relations. Pyongyang tacitly supported the August 1991 coup in the Soviet Union. In addition, it established separate diplomatic relations with Russia and the other separate states that formed the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).<sup>57</sup> Hence, though the extensive political and economic exchanges no longer existed, the old allies could maintain basic diplomatic activities and friendly attitudes toward each other.

North Korea barely escaped the danger of being entirely isolated during this period, but its overall diplomatic situation was jeopardized by the adverse global circumstances and the South's active international activities. Of course, it is true that Pyongyang could continue its official relations with Beijing and Moscow by using some formal and informal political means. Nevertheless, the South's improved global status and its northward policy, called Nordpolitik, to repair relations with the North's traditional allies undermined the Kim regime's diplomacy. This situation worsened due to the collapse of the communist camp and the formation of the U.S. unipolar system. Finally, after the late 1980s, North Korea became unable to shed its image of a closed socialist country having only a few limited foreign relations, the situation it finds itself in today.

---

<sup>55</sup> Rodong Sinmun, "Editorial," *Rodong Sinmun*, July 1, 1989.

<sup>56</sup> Rodong Sinmun, "Editorial," *Rodong Sinmun*, October 5, 1990.

<sup>57</sup> Korea Institute for National Unification, "Recent Trends of North Korea and the Communist Bloc," *Unification*, no. 117 (1991): 33.

### C. REGIME STABILITY

In the 1970s, to ensure regime stability, North Korea tried to solidify Kim Il-sung's monolithic system and organize its society and people's lives. In the process of amending the constitution in 1972, Pyongyang politically supported Kim's absolute power and position by declaring the State President System, and it adopted not only Marxism-Leninism but also *Juche* ideology as its official philosophies.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, all activities and life of the people were thoroughly organized and controlled by strict regulations and discipline, so the whole society in the late 1970s took the form of the almost perfect organization.<sup>59</sup> These changes in the political systems could be inferred as the intended preparations for Kim Jong-il's succession in the near future. Therefore, the North Korean regime in the 1970s could sustain its stability by legally justifying its totalitarian rule and keeping the entire society completely organized.

In the 1980s, the Kim regime turned its attention to the establishment of the succession system in the party and the military. Kim Jong-il was named a member of the Central Committee (CC), the Central Military Commission (CMC), and the Political Bureau of the ruling Workers' Party at its 6th convention in 1980, and emerged as the undisputed No. 2 man in the country. After that, by directly overseeing most internal and external policies except some major international issues, he could expand his political influence inside the party. In terms of ideology, he had an exclusive right to interpret *Juche*, so he could build his image as Kim Il-sung's designated ideological successor. Moreover, by taking full control over the Organization and Guidance Department and the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the party's Secretary Bureau, he strengthened the people's ideological education and the idolization of his father.<sup>60</sup> During this period of his succession training, he gradually dominated the party and gained sufficient internal supports and the legitimacy for holding power from the people.

---

<sup>58</sup> Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea*, 155.

<sup>59</sup> Tae-sup Lee, *North Korea's Economic Crisis and Regime Shift* (Seoul: Sunin, 2009), 286–287.

<sup>60</sup> Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea*, 155.

In the 1990s, Kim Jong-il completed the preparations for his succession by strengthening his authority in the military. He was appointed as the First Vice Chairman of the CMC at the first session of the 12th Supreme People's Assembly in 1990 and as the Supreme Commander of the KPA at the 19th session of the 6th Plenary Meeting of the CC in 1991. This meant that he secured his position as the next supreme leader after his father, in both the party and the military. After being named as the state leader in 1992, he was officially given the title of Chairman of the National Defense Commission (NDC) in 1993.<sup>61</sup> Taken together, it can be concluded that the establishment of the succession system for the younger Kim and his seizure of power proceeded smoothly.

On the other hand, South Korea was experiencing political instability due to the pro-democracy movement against the military dictatorship. President Park, in order to justify his long-term assumption of power, declared a state of national emergency in December 1971 by stressing the need for national unity to cope with the crisis. In addition, after starting the Revitalizing Reform (Yushin) System in October 1972, he affirmed the principle that every national resource and function had to be mobilized to promote national security and strength.<sup>62</sup> This forceful ruling, however, provoked the people's violent protests, a split in domestic politics, and criticism from the U.S. administration. Though the South's outstanding economic growth and elevated international position partially contributed to resolving political instability, popular complaints about power-concentrated presidentialism, incomplete democracy, and bureaucratic corruption did not disappear easily. Consequently, Seoul, even though it acquired civil government in 1993, could not fully stabilize its political situation.

In sum, during this period, Pyongyang successfully maintained the regime's stability by strengthening Kim Il-sung's dictatorship and arranging for his son's succession. Although there was a general dissatisfaction with the chronic economic depression and aggravated international circumstances, the Kim regime minimized the threats and challenges to itself by consolidating the monolithic system and organizing society systematically. In particular, on the basis of these political and institutional

---

<sup>61</sup> Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea*, 197–198.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 163–164.

supports, the DPRK reinforced the younger Kim's authority in the party and the military and laid the foundations for his smooth succession. Compared to the South's precarious political situation, the Kim regime's stability was the more noticeable phenomenon in the aspect of inter-Korean relations.

#### **D. ECONOMIC POWER**

In the 1970s, the DPRK continually tried to promote economic growth through the sequential economic development plans, but the results were insignificant. After barely finishing the first seven-year plan (and taking ten years to do it), Pyongyang announced the new six-year plan of 1971 to 1976 at the 5th convention of the KWP in 1970. To achieve the objectives of this plan, North Korea made internal efforts to develop high-skilled manpower and external efforts to introduce foreign facilities, technologies, and loans. Yet, these sub-objectives encountered several obstacles, such as the North's serious debt problems and international oil price rises in the mid-1970s. Eventually, the Kim regime had to terminate the plan one year early in 1975, and weather insufficient outcomes for two years.<sup>63</sup>

After that, North Korea carried out the second seven-year plan focusing on subjectivation, modernization, and scientification of the economy from 1978.<sup>64</sup> Since Pyongyang was experiencing difficulties in foreign trade due to the heavy burden of debt, it tried to minimize its economic reliance on the giant neighbors by realizing this plan. However, as the North's settlement delay and default persisted, it promulgated the Joint Venture Law in 1984 in order to attract direct foreign investments.<sup>65</sup> It meant that the DPRK accepted the limitations of pursuing economic independence and recognized the importance of expanding trade, bringing technologies, and securing external resources. Nevertheless, it was too much for North Korea to expect actual investments from the Western developed countries, because this law only covered basic matters without any detailed guidelines. Consequently, North Korea announced that it had fulfilled this seven-

---

<sup>63</sup> Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea*, 157–158.

<sup>64</sup> The Board of National Unification, *Current Trend of North Korea* (Seoul: The Board of National Unification, 1988), 209.

<sup>65</sup> Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea*, 158–159.

year plan in 1985, but it could not wipe out any practical problems such as deepening economic dependency and dire shortages of foods and basic goods.

In the third seven-year plan, started from 1987, Pyongyang emphasized that its first task was to continue enforcing subjectivation, modernization, and scientification of the economy to prepare material and technological foundations for an outright victory of socialism.<sup>66</sup> The Kim regime knew that it had to introduce advanced technologies and expand economic exchanges to achieve this goal. Especially, Kim Il-sung noticed the importance of foreign trade to escape from severe economic isolation and elevate the people's standard of living. Therefore, at the 40th anniversary of the DPRK's founding in 1988, he pointed out that the improvement of external economic relations was necessary to enhance the potential of a self-supporting economy and raise North Korean technology to the level of advanced countries.<sup>67</sup> This suggested that the North Korean leadership admitted, to itself, that the traditional socialist economy did not guarantee the survival of the regime as well as its economic rehabilitation did.

Despite this strong willingness of North Korea to further open itself to the outside world, its stagnant economic situation showed no sign of improving. Rather, its trade volume in the 1980s gradually decreased (as summarized in Table 9), and also its total debts mounted up to \$5.2 billion in 1988.<sup>68</sup> What was worse, the DPRK became the first state to be officially branded as a defaulting country by 140 Western creditor banks in 1987.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, since the 1990s, its economic conditions started to plummet more than ever before. For example, its economic growth rate, which had gone down to negative levels from 1990, recorded negative 7.6 percent in 1992, and the total debts reached \$9.28 billion due to its decreasing trade volume and chronic trade deficit.<sup>70</sup> Consequently, since Pyongyang could not import sufficient raw materials and energy, the

---

<sup>66</sup> The Board of National Unification, *Current Trend of North Korea*, 291.

<sup>67</sup> Korean Central News Agency, *Chosun Central Yearbook 1989*, 12.

<sup>68</sup> Mi-jung Park, "Four Suggestions for North Korean Economy," *Dongailbo*, September 9, 1989.

<sup>69</sup> B. C. Koh, "North Korea in 1987: Launching a New Seven-Year Plan," *Asian Survey* 28, no. 1 (1988): 64.

<sup>70</sup> Kyong-hwan Lee, "Way for Economic Recovery," *Naeoetongshin*, December 3, 1992.



operation rate of its industrial facilities remained about 30 to 45 percent, and its food situation grew extremely worse during the 1990s.

<b>Classification</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>1983</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1986</b>
<b>Export</b> (USD millions)	<b>1,134.0</b>	<b>681.0</b>	<b>736.7</b>	<b>654.4</b>	<b>693.1</b>	<b>643.3</b>	<b>684.3</b>
<b>Import</b> (USD millions)	<b>1,292.9</b>	<b>1,026.3</b>	<b>1,019.4</b>	<b>980.9</b>	<b>812.6</b>	<b>832.1</b>	<b>819.9</b>

Table 9. Changing Trend of North Korea's Trade Volume (1980–1986)<sup>71</sup>

Taken together, it seemed that North Korea's economy experienced a long-term depression in this period, owing to its unrealistic development plans and dwindling economic exchanges. Of course, the DPRK's excessive defense spending, outdated industrial facilities, and less-advanced technologies also contributed to its economic catastrophe. Yet, while these difficulties could be dealt with by the Kim regime's efforts, the failures of planned economy and external economic relations caused uncontrollable foreign debt and negative growth rate. Though Pyongyang tried to increase its trade volume and introduce foreign capital and technologies by revising the economic plans and enacting the Joint Venture Law, it could not achieve tangible results due to disadvantageous international circumstances (such as the oil crisis and the collapse of the socialist countries). Finally, North Korea faced a vicious cycle of increasing economic dependency and decreasing domestic productivity.

---

<sup>71</sup> Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea*, 161.

## **E. CORRELATION WITH THE TYPE OF PROVOCATION**

From the 1970s to the mid-1990s, North Korea usually attempted to overcome its unfavorable domestic and foreign conditions and hinder the South's growth and security through terrorist attacks. They might be roughly divided into two categories: early attacks within South Korea by overt agents, and later ones abroad, by covert agents. Thus, it can be inferred that Pyongyang was gradually trying to preclude Seoul from grasping the situation immediately and responding aggressively. In other words, it seemed that North Korea intended to escape responsibility for provocations and deter a possible massive retaliation by the ROK-U.S. combined forces. The North's policy making that determined this provocation type could be explained by the following decisive factors.

First, the KPA maintained its superiority over the ROK forces by continuing military buildup policies and developing its combination warfare capabilities. In particular, due to the leadership's strong will to secure self-reliant defense capabilities, the Kim regime could keep on increasing the investment to expand its military strength, despite its severe economic difficulties. Furthermore, by establishing the combination warfare strategy that sought synchronized operations in the front and rear areas, the KPA strove to strengthen both regular and irregular warfare forces. Therefore, all of these efforts helped set a solid foundation to keep its dominant position on the peninsula.

Second, North Korea experienced the crisis of overall diplomatic relations because of the changing international system and the weakened relations with the Soviet Union and China. For instance, the formation of the U.S.-led unipolar system and the remarkable elevation of the South's international status did great damage to the North's foreign relations. Although it could keep friendly relations with the two communist neighbors, their reform and opening up, especially their establishment of diplomatic ties with Seoul, made it hard for Pyongyang to expect vigorous exchanges with them as before. Thus, it could be concluded that the North's diplomatic relations in this period were becoming more tenuous and facing more challenges than before.

Third, the DPRK regime could secure its stability and form a foundation for the power succession by solidifying Kim Il-sung's monolithic system and organizing the society thoroughly. In the 1970s, Pyongyang strengthened the State President System through constitutional amendment and formulated rigid rules to tighten its control over the people's lives. In the 1980s, on the basis of this coercive political system, Kim Jong-il occupied key positions and reinforced his authority in the party and the military. Hence, North Korea, despite the series of collapses in the socialist world, could maintain the regime's stability by protecting its system and ideology.

Fourth, North Korea's economy was gravely affected by the continuing failure of economic development plans and moribund economic exchange with the outside world. The North's three plans during this period were revised and delayed repeatedly without substantial outcomes, and its efforts to promote broader trade and introduce foreign resources were blocked by several internal and external obstacles derived from its closed, inflexible economy and adverse global issues. For these reasons, there existed an unbridgeable economic gap, with Pyongyang suffering from huge debts and Seoul experiencing extraordinary economic growth.

Taken together, the DPRK, despite its military superiority and relatively stable regime, faced difficulties in promoting diplomatic relations and economic growth. It consistently strengthened the KPA by preparing for combination warfare and firmed up the dictatorship to smooth the future hereditary succession. Nevertheless, the changes in the Soviet and Chinese foreign policies worsened their relations with Pyongyang, and the North's efforts to boost its struggling economy finally came to naught. Thus, it could be inferred that these diplomatic and economic hardships were perceived as serious crises by North Korea, so they strongly affected the North's policy making to overcome those crises.

Given the four decisive factors analyzed above, it seems that the North's provocation type was determined by the attrition strategy during this period. According to George, the state having insufficient capacity to adopt the *fait accompli* strategy seeks a guerrilla or terrorist form of attrition strategy to change the status quo by wearing out a

relatively strong adversary.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, since North Korea, in terms of overall national strength and international recognition, was far behind the South, it tried to pass through this crisis by choosing terrorist attack as the main provocation type. This is because terrorism was the most effective military method for the DPRK to do damage to the South's growth engines and global image, while minimizing the likelihood of massive retaliation or all-out war. Therefore, it suggests that North Korea's policy making in this period accorded with the attrition strategy. The major provocations that represented this strategic decision were the assassination attempt on President Park in 1974, the Rangoon bomb blast in 1983, and the bombing of KAL 858 in 1987. The correlation between the decisive factors and the provocation type is summarized in Figure 2.

Independent Variables			Dependent Variables
	Decisive Factors of Crisis Policy Making	Assessment	Provocation Type
<b>Military Strength</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Consistent Military Buildup Policies</li> <li>· Combination Warfare Strategy</li> </ul>	<b>Advantageous</b>	<b>Attrition Strategy</b> ↓ <b>Committing Terror</b>
<b>Foreign Relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Change of the Cold War System</li> <li>· Weakened Relations with China and the Soviet Union</li> </ul>	<b>Disadvantageous</b>	
<b>Regime Stability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Kim Jong-il's Monolithic System</li> <li>· Organized and Controlled Society</li> <li>· Establishment of Succession System</li> </ul>	<b>Advantageous</b>	
<b>Economic Power</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Unsuccessful Development Plans</li> <li>· Decreasing Economic Exchanges</li> </ul>	<b>Disadvantageous</b>	

Figure 2. Correlation between Decisive Factors and Provocation Type (1970s to Mid-1990s)

<sup>72</sup> George, *Avoiding War*, 382–383.

## **V. PERIOD OF PROVOKING MARITIME CONFLICT: MID-1990s TO PRESENT**

Since the mid-1990s, the two Koreas have experienced a hugely widening disparity in their military, diplomatic, political, and economic capabilities. For example, the tight insularity of the DPRK regime and the collapse of the East-European bloc deepened the North's isolation in the international community, and its economic crisis known as the Arduous March showed no signs of recovery. Furthermore, its attempts to suppress people's complaints about these hardships did not meet with expected results but, rather, produced severe instability in the regime. Thus, Pyongyang, which was absolutely inferior to Seoul in overall national power, tried to overcome these internal and external challenges by building up its military strength. Therefore, North Korea, on the basis of its Military-First policy, spurred the development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and long-range ballistic missiles, but it was virtually impossible for the KPA to achieve military superiority over the highly advanced and heavily armed ROK-U.S. combined forces.

These changing situations made Pyongyang mainly focus on committing local maritime provocations whose impacts were completely controlled. Since the Kim regime recognized that its domestic and foreign conditions were markedly unfavorable to itself, it tried to avoid a full-scale confrontation with the South. Therefore, the KPA provoked elaborately planned local conflicts that the ROK forces could not aggressively respond to, and most of them occurred near the maritime border in the West Sea. Accordingly, this chapter analyzes the correlations between this provocation type since the mid-1990s and the changing decisive factors that affected the North's policy making.

### **A. MILITARY STRENGTH**

In this period, North Korea's primary military objective was to eliminate possible enemy threats and secure a means of diplomatic pressure by building up its self-defense capabilities. Hence, the KPA developed its abilities to wield asymmetric power and

continued modernizing its conventional forces.<sup>73</sup> First, North Korea strove to strengthen its asymmetric warfare capabilities, such as WMDs and long-range missiles, to strategically threaten Seoul and gain an advantage in negotiations. It was assumed that the DPRK began to extract plutonium between 1986 and 1994, and acquired 39 to 49 kg of weapons grade plutonium by May 2009. Thus, supposing that North Korea succeeded in developing nuclear weapons after its second nuclear test, it can be estimated that the KPA currently possesses six to eight 20-kiloton nuclear warheads.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, it has 16 types of chemical agents (with a total stockpile of 2,500 to 5,000 tons), and its capacity to produce chemical weapons is ranked third behind America and Russia.<sup>75</sup> Plus, there are 13 types of biological agents in North Korea, and five agents among them (such as anthrax, smallpox, plague, cholera, and botulinum) have already been weaponized.<sup>76</sup>

The DPRK also continued its ballistic missile program to acquire long-range strike capability. After starting to do its own missile research and development from the mid-1980s, Pyongyang extended its striking distance to 1,300 km by operationally deploying Rodong missiles in 1998. After that, though it failed in its test launches of Daepodong-1 in 1998 and Daepodong-2 in 2006 and 2009, the potential of its advanced missile technology to threaten the U.S. mainland could be demonstrated. Additionally, as North Korea launched a long-range rocket, which it reported as a satellite, in April 2012, it became known that the North's strong ambitions for a vigorous missile program had not subsided yet.<sup>77</sup> Its missile development process and stockpiles are summarized in Tables 10 and 11.

---

<sup>73</sup> Dea-kwang Park and Jin-moo Kim, *The Assessment of Surviving Strategy of the Kim Jong Il Regime and Future Prospect* (Seoul: Korea Institute for Defense Analysis, 2011), 111–112.

<sup>74</sup> Korea Institute for Defense Analysis, *2009 Northeast Asia's Military Power and Strategy* (Seoul: Korea Institute for Defense Analysis, 2010), 53–55.

<sup>75</sup> Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, *2012 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, 2013), 35–36.

<sup>76</sup> Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, *Defense Policies of the Roh Administration* (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, 2003), 23.

<sup>77</sup> Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, *2012 Defense White Paper*, 34–35.

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Early 1970s</b>	<b>North Korea obtains missile technology from participation in the People's Republic of China's missile development program</b> (estimated)
<b>1976–1981</b>	<b>Introduces USSR-made SCUD-B and launcher from Egypt, initiates reverse engineering and development</b>
<b>April 1984</b>	<b>First SCUD-B missile test launched</b>
<b>May 1986</b>	<b>SCUD-C missile test launched</b>
<b>1988</b>	<b>Operational deployment of SCUD-B/C missiles</b>
<b>May 1990</b>	<b>First Rodong missiles test launched</b>
<b>June 1991</b>	<b>SCUD-C missiles launched</b>
<b>May 1993</b>	<b>Rodong missiles test launched</b>
<b>1998</b>	<b>Operational deployment of Rodong missiles</b>
<b>August 1998</b>	<b>Daepodong-1 missile test launched</b> (North insists it to be a satellite)
<b>July 2006</b>	<b>Daepodong-2, Rodong, and SCUD missiles test launched</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>Operational deployment of Musudan missiles</b>
<b>April 2009</b>	<b>Long-range missile launched</b> (improved version of the Daepodong-2) (North insists it to be a satellite)
<b>July 2009</b>	<b>Rodong and SCUD missiles launched</b>
<b>April 2012</b>	<b>Long-range rocket launched</b> (improved version of the Daepodong-2) (North insists it to be a satellite)

Table 10. North Korea's Missile Development Process<sup>78</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, *2012 Defense White Paper*, 356.

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Range (km)</b>	<b>Warhead (kg)</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>SCUD-B</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>Operational Deployment</b>
<b>SCUD-C</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>Operational Deployment</b>
<b>Rodong</b>	<b>1,300</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>Operational Deployment</b>
<b>Musudan</b>	<b>Over 3,000</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>Operational Deployment</b>
<b>Daepodong-1</b>	<b>2,500</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>Test launch</b>
<b>Daepodong-2</b>	<b>Over 6,700</b>	<b>650–1,000 (est.)</b>	<b>Under development</b>
<b>New Missile</b>	<b>Unidentified</b>	<b>Unidentified</b>	<b>Under development</b>

Table 11. North Korea's Long-Range Missile Stockpiles<sup>79</sup>

Second, in the process of modernizing conventional forces, the KPA focused on upgrading existing forces and improving their qualities. Pyongyang, even as it spent more resources to strengthen its asymmetric power since the 1990s, did not stop its consistent efforts to improve conventional forces in their maneuver, strike, and infiltration capabilities to support the combination warfare strategy. As shown in Table 12, the North's conventional power had experienced only a slight quantitative growth during the 2000s, meaning that the Kim regime focused more on their qualitative improvement than quantitative growth.

---

<sup>79</sup> Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, *2012 Defense White Paper*, 356.



Classification				2000	2010	Variation (%)
Troops (10,000)				117	119	+1.7
Major Combat Strength	Army	Units	Corps(level)	20	15	-25
			Divisions	67	90	+34.3
			Mobile Brigades	69	70	+1.4
		Equipment	Tanks	3,800	4,100	+7.9
			Armored Vehicles	2,300	2,100	-8.7
			Field Artillery	12,500	13,700	+9.6
	Navy	Surface Combatants		430	420	-2.3
		Support Vessels		470	320	-31.9
		Submarines		90	70	-22.2
	Air Force	Fighters		870	820	-5.7
		Support Aircraft		840	530	-36.9
		Helicopters		320	300	+6.3
Reserve Troops (10,000)				748	770	+2.9

Table 12. Quantitative Changes of North Korean Conventional Forces<sup>80</sup>

Nevertheless, the DPRK had several fundamental obstacles hindering it from using its military power to the full extent. For starters, although Pyongyang officially announced its possession of nuclear weapons, it was uncertain whether it had secured proper technology to use them in an actual war. Moreover, even if North Korea had

<sup>80</sup> Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, *2000 Defense White Paper*, 272; Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, *2010 Defense White Paper*, 340; Dea-kwang Park and Jin-moo Kim, *The Assessment of Surviving Strategy*, 121.

enough capability, no one could be sure that a Northern nuclear attack (which can be viewed as a suicidal act) would indeed happen. This was because the ROK-U.S. combined forces, which were overwhelming the KPA in both qualitative and quantitative aspects, could destroy the Kim regime by launching a large-scale preemptive attack when they discovered the North's movement to use nuclear weapons. This assumption could be applied not only to nuclear weapons but also to other WMDs and long-range missiles. Another barrier was that the North's excessively weakened national power could not support its conduct of war. It was well known that the KPA was not allocated enough resources to train, feed, and manage its troops, owing to the chronic economic depression. In addition, North Korean forces were estimated to secure only the minimum amount of war reserve stocks (such as two to three month's ammunition and oil) in peacetime. That is to say, the North's conventional forces were gradually losing their value and capabilities as time went on. Consequently, these obstacles devastated North Korea's confidence in its military superiority over the South and its victory in a second Korean war.

## **B. RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND RUSSIA**

As the international community rated North Korea as one of the rogue states in the mid-1990s, its diplomatic relations became further isolated. For instance, it was ostracized by the rest of the world due to its coercive political actions such as three-generation succession, violent dictatorship, and human rights abuses.<sup>81</sup> Pyongyang, in order to resolve this isolated and pressing situation, and to draw economic assistance from other countries, concentrated on developing nuclear weapons and long-range missiles.<sup>82</sup> These efforts, however, deepened the concerns of all its neighbors in Northeast Asia, and the United States, which was under a conservative government and reacting to the September 11 attacks in the early 2000s, roundly denounced the North's

---

<sup>81</sup> Kyu-sup Jeong, *North Korea's Foreign Policy*, 211.

<sup>82</sup> Deok-min Yoon, "The Assessment of the Current Changes and Trend of North Korean Diplomacy," in *Analysis on Major International Issues*, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Republic of Korea (Seoul: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Republic of Korea, 2000), 7–8.

violation of the Geneva Agreed Framework and designated it as part of an axis of evil.<sup>83</sup> As a result, these miscalculated strategic intentions of North Korea bolstered the U.S. leverage on inter-Korean issues, and the North's diplomatic situation became more jeopardized.

In this context, the traditional friendly relations between North Korea and China also went through a crisis. Pyongyang publicly criticized the Sino-South Korean amity in 1992, and then stopped high-level visits to and from China for a while after the death of Kim Il-sung.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, since both Beijing and Pyongyang agreed on the continued need to promote their relations for their common interests and security, they began to strengthen their strategic partnership again with Kim Jong-il's trip to Beijing in 2000.<sup>85</sup> However, the international community, which sought to restrict the North's nuclear tests, weapons exports, and human rights violations, blamed China for its lukewarm attitude toward these issues and required it to behave responsibly. Thus, it was not clear whether the Sino-North Korean relations essential for the Kim regime's survival could maintain their former friendliness and mutual interdependency.

Meanwhile, the North's relations with Russia did not seem to return to the close socialist alliance of the past. Even though Pyongyang lost one of its credible ideological supporters due the collapse of the Soviet Union, it attempted to establish new cooperative relations with Moscow by means of summit meetings and a treaty of friendship in the early 2000s. In particular, the two countries confirmed their unified positions on some major political and economic issues by signing two joint declarations in Moscow and Pyongyang.<sup>86</sup> However, since Russia no longer had the same ideological ties with North Korea, it could easily decide to take a strong stand against the North's nuclear tests and agreed to the UN sanctions on the DPRK without supporting it unconditionally. To

---

<sup>83</sup> Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea*, 240–241.

<sup>84</sup> Ha-sung Park, "Strained Relations between Beijing and Pyongyang," *Segyeilbo*, May 8, 1993.

<sup>85</sup> Joo-ha Kim, "Kim Jong-il's Trip to Beijing: Profit or Loss?" *Dongailbo*, August 26, 2010.

<sup>86</sup> Institute for Unification Education, *Understanding of North Korea* (Seoul: Ministry of Unification, Republic of Korea, 2008), 76–83.

conclude, their relations could not be fully recovered until the Kim regime gave up its nuclear program.

In summary, Pyongyang, in this period, experienced severe diplomatic difficulties caused by the broad international pressure on itself and China, and by Russia's changing attitudes toward its issues. Not surprisingly, this diplomatic isolation was the likely outcome of the North's unilateral and threatening policies, and its weakened relations with Beijing and Moscow meant that there remained no powerful advocate for the Kim regime. Because Pyongyang does not seem inclined to give up its closed dictatorship and the WMD that it sees as directly related to its survival, its diplomatic situation will not be easily improved in the near future.

### C. REGIME STABILITY

Kim Jong-il, who had become the supreme leader of North Korea after his father's death in July 1994, tried to ensure regime stability by strengthening the status of the military.<sup>87</sup> At the Supreme People's Assembly in September 1998, his speech implied the importance of building a so-called garrison state in which the NDC could wield powerful influence on every field of government activities for the purpose of securing national security.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, he reinforced his legal status and rights as the Chairman of the NDC by amending the constitution at the Assembly in April 2009, and also began to assign key positions of the KWP to high-ranking military personnel beginning in the 2000s.<sup>89</sup> These changes meant that Pyongyang intended to effectively suppress the internal and external threats undermining the regime by establishing the NDC-centered unified command system.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea*, 217–218.

<sup>88</sup> Rodong Sinmun, "Editorial," *Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 1999; Jin-wook Choi, "Changes in North Korean Ruling Style and Foreign Policy Following Kim Jong-il's Health Problem," *Review of the North Korean Economy* (July 2009): 28.

<sup>89</sup> Seong-il Hyun, *North Korean National Strategy and Power Elites: Focusing on Leadership Policy* (Seoul: Seonin, 2008), 275.

<sup>90</sup> Joon-rae Jo, "North Korea's Military-First Policy and the Influence of Military Leadership," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* (Summer 2003): 90.

This strong Military-First policy, however, was not enough to dispel the North's mounting social unrest. The people's complaints about oppressive dictatorship and long-lasting economic depression had reached an extreme, and this public discontent led to the people's actual defiant behaviors running against the regime's rule. Some young North Koreans, after experiencing capitalist culture, began to cast doubts on socialism, and intellectuals directly criticized the contradictions in the party's system and policies. Plus, the number of people who fled North Korea in the face of death increased (as shown in Table 13). Despite this, high-ranking party officials, by maintaining an irresponsible attitude toward these issues, amplified people's antipathy to the regime.<sup>91</sup>

<b>Classification</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Defectors</b>	<b>947</b>	<b>1,044</b>	<b>1,282</b>	<b>1,382</b>	<b>2,548</b>	<b>2,929</b>	<b>2,706</b>

Table 13. North Korean Defectors (1998–2011)<sup>92</sup>

South Korea's consistent hard-line policy against the North made it more difficult to maintain the stability of its regime. Even though the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations pursued, from 1998 to 2008, the peaceful engagement policies of promoting political reconciliation and economic cooperation with North Korea, the South's influential conservative parties criticized the North's constant provocations, human rights issues, and nuclear tests; they were decisive obstacles to offering extensive help to Pyongyang. Later, the administration of Lee Myung-bak made a determined effort in 2008 to redefine the Kim regime as a serious menace to peace on the Korean Peninsula, and attempted to put pressure on the North by solidifying the ROK-U.S. alliance and urging the international community to support the UN sanctions. To achieve this, South Korea expanded its role in maintaining global peace by actively participating in the UN

<sup>91</sup> Jin-hwan Kim, *North Korean Crisis Theory* (Seoul: Seonin, 2010), 312–313.

<sup>92</sup> Ministry of Unification, "The Status of North Korean Defectors," Ministry of Unification, <http://www.unikorea.go.kr/CmsWeb/viewPage.req?idx=PG0000000365>.

Peace-Keeping Operations (PKO) and holding the Nuclear Security Summit in 2012. All of these efforts contributed to destabilizing the North Korean regime.

Taken together, Pyongyang seemed to be facing grave domestic and foreign threats that impacted its stability after the mid-1990s. The people's increasing dissident activities had the possibility to lead to the collapse of the regime, and the South's diplomatic efforts to promote international action against North Korea forced Pyongyang to lose its global status. Besides, the North's attempt to settle these issues by repressive measures met with little success, and also Kim Jong-il's death in 2011 pushed it closer to the brink of collapse. Hence, the DPRK regime, even though it managed to accomplish Kim Jung-un's succession, still has a long way to go before it can completely secure its stability.

#### **D. ECONOMIC POWER**

During this period, the state of the DPRK's economy was catastrophic, which was clearly demonstrated by some key economic indicators. For starters, its gross national income (GNI) remained stationary, and reached only 2.56 percent of the South's GNI in 2010 (as shown in Table 14). Plus, Table 15 suggests that Pyongyang did not fully escape from its chronic depression, even though it experienced temporary economic growth. In particular, it has been suffering a food shortage of 200 million tons, every year since the 1990s, which led to the starvation of millions of people and seriously weakened the food rationing system.<sup>93</sup> Finally, these extended economic difficulties made the Kim regime lose its control over the society by prompting illegal private economic activities and undermining the concept of collective labor.

---

<sup>93</sup> Statistics Korea, *2011 Major Statistics of North Korea* (Daejeon: Statistics Korea, 2011), 59; Bong-hwa Jeong, *North Korean Policy toward South Korea*, 249.

<b>Classification</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>South Korea (A)</b> (USD millions)	<b>569.9</b>	<b>352.1</b>	<b>530.8</b>	<b>576.2</b>	<b>724.5</b>	<b>952.5</b>	<b>937.9</b>	<b>1,014.6</b>
<b>North Korea (B)</b> (USD millions)	<b>21.4</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>24.8</b>	<b>26.0</b>
<b>A/B Ratio (%)</b>	<b>3.75</b>	<b>3.58</b>	<b>3.17</b>	<b>2.95</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>2.69</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>2.56</b>

Table 14. Comparison of GNI of the Two Koreas (1996–2010)<sup>94</sup>

<b>Classification</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>Rate (%)</b>	<b>-3.6</b>	<b>-1.1</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>-1.0</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>-0.5</b>

Table 15. North Korea's Economic Growth Rate (1996–2010)<sup>95</sup>

The reasons for this economic crisis could be largely separated into two categories: the imbalanced resource allocation focusing on military buildup and the absence of fundamental economic reform. First, since Pyongyang injected an unreasonably large portion of the budget into national defense on the basis of its Military-First policy, it could not mobilize enough resources for its economic recovery. The Kim regime believed that its massive military power was an effective means of protecting national sovereignty and promoting internal unity, so it did not give up its military buildup policies despite the poor economic situation. Of course, North Korea's arms exports to several authoritarian states in the Middle East and Southeast Asia (such as Yemen, Pakistan, Iran, and Syria)

---

<sup>94</sup> Statistics Korea, *2011 Major Statistics of North Korea*, 78.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

contributed significantly to acquiring foreign currency, but these export earnings were not sufficient to put an end to the North's sharp economic downturn.<sup>96</sup>

Second, North Korea's attempts to reform the economy did not bring on revolutionary changes in its socialist economic structure. For instance, the Economic Management Improvement Measures in 2002 aimed to revive the domestic economy by inducing foreign investments in special economic zones, but it could not achieve tangible results as the U.S.-North Korean relations became restrained due to the North's nuclear issue. Furthermore, the currency reform in 2009, even though it was carried out to end the illegal circulation of money and reaffirm the initial purpose of the planned economy, generated sudden inflation, an unstable exchange rate, and an active black market in North Korea.<sup>97</sup> In other words, these political attempts seemed not to be able to solve the North's structural economic problems such as its economic isolation, poor technology, and resource scarcity.

It was obvious that North Korea realized the seriousness of the economic crisis threatening the regime's survival and adopted various measures to overcome this situation. However, despite these efforts, the North's determined will to beef up military strength and blind faith in its socialist economic system were never changed. Therefore, it can be expected that Pyongyang will not renounce these values for its economic recovery even if it faces a further economic crisis.

#### **E. CORRELATION WITH THE TYPE OF PROVOCATION**

Given the North's major provocations during this period, the Kim regime seemed to try to provoke controlled maritime conflicts with the South after achieving local superiority through elaborate preparations. Since Pyongyang hoped to avert an all-out war due to its inferiority in national strength, it planned provocations at the times and places favorable to itself and proceeded with its nuclear program to prevent an

---

<sup>96</sup> Man-kwon Nam, *North Korean Military System: Evaluation and Prospect* (Seoul: Korea Institute for Defense Analysis, 2006) 142.

<sup>97</sup> Yong-soo Park, "The Economic Reform in North Korea and its Barrier," *Journal of International Area Studies* 13, no. 1 (2009): 52–55.



unexpected escalation. Thus, the above-analyzed four decisive factors formed the background that made North Korea choose this type of provocation.

First, the KPA could not maintain its military superiority over the ROK-U.S. combined forces, despite its continuous efforts to reinforce asymmetric power and upgrade existing conventional forces. For example, North Korea's technological ability to actually launch nuclear weapons was not completely demonstrated yet, and the possibility of its nuclear attack was pretty slim because of the expected devastating attack from the ROK-U.S. combined forces. Furthermore, the North's national strength had so declined that it could not maintain the performance of its conventional forces and effectively prepare for possible war.

Second, as the international concerns about North Korea mounted and Beijing and Moscow's foreign policies toward the peninsula underwent profound changes, the North's overall diplomatic relations became seriously aggravated. Not surprisingly, the international criticism and pressure on the DPRK were inevitable consequences of its vicious dictatorship and illegal weapons tests. What was worse was that its former ideological allies, China and Russia, also withdrew their unconditional support for the North Korean regime, bowing to the diplomatic benefits of siding with world public opinion. As a result, Pyongyang came to find itself in the position of having to conceive its own survival strategy under the international isolation.

Third, North Korea's regime stability was hard to maintain due to its people's increasing dissatisfaction with the social system and the South's hard-line policy against the North. Indeed, quite a few North Koreans, who had gotten tired of failed economic policies and restricted lives, were gradually trying to escape from the socialist system, and these defiant behaviors jeopardized the institutional base of the Kim regime. Moreover, Seoul, by criticizing this tragic situation, discontinued its Sunshine Policy and instead induced global cooperation to restrain Pyongyang. Thus, the North's strategy to ensure regime stability by solidifying the monolithic system and organizing the society was no longer effective.

Fourth, North Korea could not emerge from the prolonged economic slump because of its inefficient distribution of resources and unsuccessful economic reforms. The North's economy ebbed and flowed slightly, without completely getting out of the depression, and its chronic shortages of food, energy, and basic commodities were threatening most people's lives. In addition, Pyongyang, even though it recognized the need to defuse this economic crisis, could not neglect the importance of its military buildup and socialist economy. Hence, by sacrificing its economy in this dilemma, North Korea brought itself to the brink of economic disaster.

Taken together, during this period, the DPRK was under unfavorable conditions in every decisive factor. This was the result of its unilateral activities that disregarded global norms and ethics and only focused on its distorted socialism. Pyongyang tried to settle these difficulties by strengthening military capabilities, but its international isolation, social instability, and economic crisis only became exacerbated instead of getting better. Furthermore, because of these national disadvantages, it decided to spend its limited budget mainly in reinforcing its military power, but this did not guarantee its military superiority over the South. Finally, North Korea's new awareness of these changing situations made it revise its way of policy making.

As a result, it could be inferred that Pyongyang, whose policy making was deeply affected by the above-mentioned four decisive factors, determined its provocation type by applying the strategy of controlled pressure. George insists that a state that fears an uncontrollable escalation chooses this strategy to get the enemy into trouble by committing a meticulously planned provocation against it.<sup>98</sup> In the same vein, since North Korea hoped to avoid a full-scale confrontation with the ROK forces due to its inferior national power, it decided to carry out maritime local provocations consistent with the strategy of controlled pressure. Indeed, the major provocations of this period such as the Yeonpyeong Naval Campaigns in 1992 and 2002, sinking of *Cheonan* in 2010, and shelling of Yeonpyeong in 2010 were all elaborately conducted by the KPA at the times and places it intended. Therefore, this policy making of North Korea could be

---

<sup>98</sup> George, *Avoiding War*, 381–382.

explained by the strategy of controlled pressure. The correlation between the decisive factors and the provocation type is summarized in Figure 3.

Independent Variables			Dependent Variables
	Decisive Factors of Crisis Policy Making	Assessment	Provocation Type
<b>Military Strength</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Rare Possibility of Nuclear Attack</li> <li>· Overwhelming Power of the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces</li> </ul>	<b>Disadvantageous</b>	<b>Strategy of Controlled Pressure</b> ↓ <b>Provoking Maritime Conflict</b>
<b>Foreign Relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Broad International Criticism and Pressure on the DPRK</li> <li>· Changed Foreign Policies of China and Russia</li> </ul>	<b>Disadvantageous</b>	
<b>Regime Stability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· People's Dissatisfaction with Social System</li> <li>· South Korea's Hard-Line Policy</li> </ul>	<b>Disadvantageous</b>	
<b>Economic Power</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Imbalanced Resource Allocation</li> <li>· Absence of Fundamental Economic Reform</li> </ul>	<b>Disadvantageous</b>	

Figure 3. Correlation between Decisive Factors and Provocation Type (Mid-1990s to Present)

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## VI. CONCLUSION

This research starts with the question of how the DPRK selects the types of provocation it will take. Given that Pyongyang will continue its provocative actions against Seoul unless the two Koreas are unified, the answer to this question can give the U.S. and South Korean governments a crucial idea to restore peace on the Korean Peninsula. For this reason, this research, on the hypothesis that North Korea has perceived its security situation as a continuous crisis, analyzes the patterns of its determination of provocation types by applying existing models of crisis policy making. First, to form the theoretical frame applicable to this study, it draws independent variables from Yong-pil Lee's theory and dependent variables from George's. Then, it divides the major provocations of North Korea into three periods according to their similarities, and examines how the decisive factors of each period affected the North's choice of its provocation types.

The results of the analysis suggest that there were meaningful connections between the four decisive factors the DPRK faced in each period and its provocation types. First, in the period of triggering war, Pyongyang was in a more advantageous position than Seoul in all aspects of military strength, foreign relations, regime stability, and economic power. North Korea possessed superior military and economic power to the South right after the war, and this national strength, by mixing with the North's favorable political and diplomatic conditions, led the Kim regime to carry out bold and daring provocations that could escalate into a full-scale war. Second, in the period of committing terror, Pyongyang started to experience economic and diplomatic difficulties due to its weakened relations with China and the Soviet Union and unsuccessful economic development plans. Although North Korea still maintained strong military capabilities and a stable regime, these hardships made the North commit terrorist forms of provocations that could give a terrific shock to the South but minimize its retaliatory attacks. Lastly, in the period of provoking maritime conflict, North Korea began to lose its dominant position in every decisive factor. The North's diplomatic isolation, economic recession, and internal complaints were getting increasingly serious, and its

steady efforts to build up its military capacity did not contribute to solving these difficulties. Hence, in order to make its position secure in the North-South relationship, North Korea focused on provoking maritime conflicts whose impacts were thoroughly controlled. All of these changes in decisive factors and provocation types are summarized in Figure 4.

	Independent Variables				Dependent Variables
	Military Strength	Foreign Relations	Regime Stability	Economic Power	
<b>Period of Triggering War</b> (after war - 1960s)	Advantageous	Advantageous	Advantageous	Advantageous	Fait Accompli Strategy
<b>Period of Committing Terror</b> (1970s - mid-1990s)	Advantageous	Disadvantageous	Advantageous	Disadvantageous	Attrition Strategy
<b>Period of Provoking Maritime Conflict</b> (mid-1990s - present)	Disadvantageous	Disadvantageous	Disadvantageous	Disadvantageous	Strategy of Controlled Pressure

Figure 4. Changing Trend of Decisive Factors and Provocation Types

Taken together, these decisive factors of crisis policy making have gradually become more unfavorable to North Korea, and the types of its provocations have constantly evolved according to those changes. It means that Pyongyang has lost its confidence of winning a direct confrontation with Seoul and begun to seriously worry

about the South's response to its menacing actions. For this reason, the aggressiveness and boldness of the North's provocations have decreased more and more, and the means of conducting them have become more limited, indirect, and crafty. Given that the four factors applied in this study were not the only, but were the most crucial, ones that decisively affected the North's decision-making, it can be concluded that Pyongyang has determined the targets, scale, and methods of provocations on the basis of the analysis of its current military, diplomatic, political, and economic conditions.

Therefore, what type of provocations will be initiated by North Korea in the future? Of course, it may be impossible to exactly verify how the North's decisive factors will change with the times or how those changes will affect its determination of the types of provocations. This is because the North's subjective evaluation of its domestic and foreign situations can be different from the assessment by surrounding countries, and the Kim regime can make an extreme decision when it faces unbearably severe difficulties. However, the obvious point is that Pyongyang's confidence to defeat Seoul will not be restored soon, and the unexpected strong response of the United States and South Korea will confuse the North's strategic decision. In conclusion, the most effective way for South Korea to deter any possible provocations by the North is to put more pressure on the Kim regime by using its overwhelming national power and conveying its strong intention to retaliate against the North's threats on the basis of the firm ROK-U.S. military alliance.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Baek, In-hak. "The Course of North Korean Socialism." In *North Korea's Policy and Society*, edited by Eun-ho Lee and Young-jae Kim, 143–187. Seoul: Seoul Press, 1994.
- Bermidez Jr., Joseph S. *North Korean Special Forces*. Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1988.
- The Board of National Unification. *Current Trend of North Korea*. Seoul: The Board of National Unification, 1988.
- Cha, Victor D., and David C. Kang, *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.
- Chang, Choeng Seong. *Ideology Et System En Coree Du Nord*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997.
- Cho, Chun-sung. *The North*. Seoul: Koryo, 1969.
- Choi, Jin-wook. "Changes in North Korean Ruling Style and Foreign Policy Following Kim Jong-il's Health Problem." *Review of the North Korean Economy* (July 2009): 22–49.
- Collins, Robert M. "North Korea's Strategy of Compellence, Provocations, and the Northern Limit Line." In *Confronting Security Challenges on the Korean Peninsula*, edited by Bruce E. Bechtol, 4–36. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2011.
- Fischer, Hannah. *North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950–2007*. CRS Report RL30004. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2007.
- Dongailbo. *North Korea Viewed in Source Material, 1945–1988*. Seoul: Dongailbo, 1989.
- George, Alexander L. *Avoiding War: Problems of Crisis Management*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1991.
- Hamm, Taik-young. *Political Economy of National Security: State Power and Armament of the Two Koreas*. Seoul: Bobmunsa, 1998.
- . "State Power and Armament of the Two Koreas: A Case Study." Doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, 1996.
- Hyun, Seong-il. *North Korean National Strategy and Power Elites: Focusing on Leadership Policy*. Seoul: Seonin, 2008.

- The Institute for Far Eastern Studies. *The Collection on North Korea*. Seoul: The Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 1974.
- Institute for Unification Education. *Understanding of North Korea*. Seoul: Ministry of Unification, Republic of Korea, 2008.
- Jeong, Bong-hwa. *North Korean Policy toward South Korea: Continuity and Change*. Seoul: Hanul, 2005.
- Jeong, Kyu-sup. *North Korea's Foreign Policy: Past and Present*. Seoul: Ilshinsa, 1997.
- Jo, Joon-rae. "North Korea's Military-First Policy and the Influence of Military Leadership." *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* (Summer 2003): 77–112.
- Kihl, Young Whan, and Hong Nack Kim. *North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival*. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005.
- Kim, Chang-hee. *Understanding North Korean Policy and Society*. Seoul: Bobmunsa, 2006.
- Kim, Hak-joon. *Fifty Year History of North Korea*. Seoul: Donga, 1995.
- Kim, Il-sung. *Kim Il Sung: Work 17*. Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1984.
- . *Kim Il Sung: Work 20*. Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1984.
- Kim, Jin-hwan. *North Korean Crisis Theory*. Seoul: Seonin, 2010.
- Kim, Joo-ha. "Kim Jong-il's Trip to Beijing: Profit of Loss?" *Dongailbo*. August 26, 2010.
- Kim, Kang-nyung. "Change of the Northeast Asia's Security Environment and Korea's Defense Policy Issues." *Northeast Asia Studies* 26, no. 1 (2011): 40–62.
- Kim, Kwang-soo. "The Establishment and Development of the Korean People's Army, 1945–1990." In *The Military of North Korea: A New Look*, edited by University of North Korean Studies, Kyungnam University, 97–143. Seoul: Hanul, 2006.
- Koh, B. C. "North Korea in 1987: Launching a New Seven-Year Plan." *Asian Survey* 28, no. 1 (1988): 34–72.
- Korea Institute for Defense Analysis. *2009 Northeast Asia's Military Power and Strategy*. Seoul: Korea Institute for Defense Analysis, 2010.
- Korea Institute for National Unification. *Comparison of National Power of the Two Koreas*. Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 1992.

- . “Recent Trends of North Korea and the Communist Bloc.” *Unification*, no. 117 (1991): 21–47.
- Korean Central News Agency. *Chosun Central Yearbook 1962*. Pyongyang: Korean Central News Agency, 1962.
- . *Chosun Central Yearbook 1964*. Pyongyang: Korean Central News Agency, 1964.
- . *Chosun Central Yearbook 1965*. Pyongyang: Korean Central News Agency, 1965.
- . *Chosun Central Yearbook 1981*. Pyongyang: Korean Central News Agency, 1981.
- . *Chosun Central Yearbook 1989*. Pyongyang: Korean Central News Agency, 1989.
- Korean Workers’ Party. *The History of Korean Workers’ Party*. Pyongyang: Korean Workers’ Party Press, 1991.
- Lee, Chong-Sik. “Kim Il-Song of North Korea.” *Asian Survey* 7, no. 6 (1967): 375–399.
- Lee, Doowon. “Assessing North Korean Economic Reform: Historical Trajectory, Opportunities, and Constraints.” *Pacific Focus* 8, no. 2 (1993): 13–37.
- Lee, Kyong-hwan. “Way for Economic Recovery.” *Naeoetongshin*. December 3, 1992.
- Lee, Tae-sup. *North Korea’s Economic Crisis and Regime Shift*. Seoul: Sunin, 2009.
- Lee, Yong-pil. *Crisis Management: Theories and Cases*. Seoul: Ingansarang, 1992.
- Ministry of Information, Republic of Korea. *North Korea’s Economy and Life*. Seoul: Ministry of Information, Republic of Korea, 1993.
- Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea. *Defense Policies of the Roh Administration*. Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, 2003.
- . *2000 Defense White Paper*. Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, 2001.
- . *2010 Defense White Paper*. Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, 2011.
- . *2012 Defense White Paper*. Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, 2013.

- Ministry of Unification. "The Status of North Korean Defectors." Ministry of Unification. Accessed October 22, 2013. <http://www.unikorea.go.kr/CmsWeb/viewPage.req?idx=PG0000000365>.
- Nam, Man-kwon. *North Korean Military System: Evaluation and Prospect*. Seoul: Korea Institute for Defense Analysis, 2006.
- Park, Dea-kwang, and Jin-moo Kim. *The Assessment of Surviving Strategy of the Kim Jong Il Regime and Future Prospect*. Seoul: Korea Institute for Defense Analysis, 2011.
- Park, Ha-sung. "Strained Relations between Beijing and Pyongyang." *Segyeilbo*. May 8, 1993.
- Park, Mi-jung. "Four Suggestions for North Korean Economy." *Dongailbo*. September 9, 1989.
- Park, Yong-soo. "The Economic Reform in North Korea and its Barrier." *Journal of International Area Studies* 13, no. 1 (2009): 37–69.
- Rodong Sinmun. "Editorial." *Rodong Sinmun*. July 1, 1989.
- . "Editorial." *Rodong Sinmun*. October 5, 1990.
- . "Editorial." *Rodong Sinmun*. January 1, 1999.
- Seong, Ha-yoon. "Study on the Cause of North Korean Military Provocations: Focusing on the Bombardment to Yeonpyeong Island." Master's thesis, Korea University, 2012.
- Shin, Dong-gi. "Chinese People Moving Forward the Socialist Way under the CCP's Control." *Global Life*, no. 512 (1990): 27–49.
- Statistics Korea. *2011 Major Statistics of North Korea*. Daejeon: Statistics Korea, 2011.
- Suh, Dae-sook. *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.
- Yoon, Deok-min. "The Assessment of the Current Changes and Trend of North Korean Diplomacy." In *Analysis on Major International Issues*, edited by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Republic of Korea, 3–24. Seoul: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Republic of Korea, 2000.

## **INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST**

1. Defense Technical Information Center  
Ft. Belvoir, Virginia
2. Dudley Knox Library  
Naval Postgraduate School  
Monterey, California